



Cedar Point Yacht Club

Sailboat Racing at its Best



Cedar Point Spring Regatta - Mental Checklist (by Mike Matan)

Well Spring is finally here, the Laser Spring Regatta that is. It even felt a little like Spring on Saturday (April 14), 50 degree temperatures and even a little sun. Chris Johannessen set something of a record winning his first race in his new boat (he won the third as well on his way to second overall).

The wind speed varied widely today from around five to fifteen knots, and it came down the course in bands, often filling in from either the right or left (usually left) with an accompanying shift. It was impossible to get every shift right so we all spent lots of time sailing on the lifted tack looking over our shoulder at the dozen boats to windward who not only appeared to have overtaken us but were sailing even higher and faster. My mental checklist for the day included:

1/ Starting: "Make sure I start in the middle of the fleet and MUST have clear wind" Starting is interesting, nothing is more important especially in light winds but very few people are any good at it. (How many people do you hear say "I find starting very easy and almost always get the exact start I'm looking for" - not many.) I try to be realistic, how good at starting am I (average!). Am I really going to pull off that perfect pin end start amongst 20 other boats (10% chance!) or should I give up on the chance of top spot at the first mark and start in a less optimal but less crowded area in clear wind with a good chance of top 5 at the first mark if I sail well in clear wind (yes!)? I find you can be more aggressive when the "I" or "Z" flags are out as most people hang further back and hence the optimal places on the line are less crowded.

2/ Tactics: "It looks like the pressure and shifts are coming from the left more often than the right...but I'm not completely sure. Lets keep in the middle of the fleet up the beats and maybe go left (ish) if I'm not sure what to do". Given the unpredictability of the wind shifts I tried to stay in the middle of the fleet to minimize losses when I got the wind bands wrong. Starting in clear air even if not at the optimal end was important as with the big shifts there was often only one tack to be on at any given time so the usual option of tacking to clear your air after a bad start often meant sailing on the wrong shift and losing even more ground.

As you can probably tell, I was really trying to avoid any big losses either from being buried on the start line or being badly burned by a big shift to give myself the chance of getting the best result my boatspeed and tactics would allow.

Best start of the day goes to Ginny Worcester. Ginny noticed that the wind had shifted so you could not cross or even get to the line on starboard. So she approached the line from above the line and ended up 5 boat lengths above most other boats when the gun went.

Good call by the race committee on race 5. They shortened a two lap race at the windward mark. A number of people didn't notice and there was some very competitive sailing back down to the start line. Derek Jackson was in so much of a hurry that he even capsized down the run....somewhat of a concern for Derek as he was sailing his first race after surgery to repair his arm, which he broke in a freak accident. Derek's third place overall was particularly impressive given his lack of recent action. (Derek must be feeling better as he asked me if I want to cycle up from the city (that's Manhattan not Stamford!) with him one weekend before sailing....)

Thanks to Andy Hoffman for organizing the food and additional beer after the race. Many thanks to Scott Hardy of The Boat Locker for donating a lycra/neoprene top by Sea Australia to the winner, and the Gill Polarized/Floating Sunglasses, won as a Sportsmanship Award by newcomer Jessica Clafin.

It's still a week away so the weather can change but the forecast for next weekend is 61 degrees! See you all Sunday!

- *Mike Matan*

Daily Results...