

Lopez Family Wins Corsair 24 Midwinter Championship

Bert Rice

St. Petersburg Yacht Club: Over a thousand people with almost two hundred boats gathered for the first, 2006 Lands' End NOOD Regatta for the year on February 17 - 19. With the six 28 R's on the same starting line as the six 24's, we were looking forward to some great racing following the skippers' meeting on Thursday evening. After all, this was going to be the first, official Corsair 24 Midwinter Championship.

The **TACK** by Michael Zotzky, *President of the 28 R Class Association*

"This is the second year I have attended this event, and flew in from Texas when a crew spot became available. The club is beautiful, great buffet, the race management exceptional, and all of the people associated with the regatta extremely friendly and helpful. Having slips available for our boats to be tied up opened twenty-feet wide was fantastic, and I especially want to thank whoever made that possible. Our Corsair 28R fleet will be back next year, and likely many years to come."

Then came Friday morning – Day One. What a dock party! By 1440 the AP had turned into an abandonment for the day. I guess, friends and neighbors, if you can't enjoy great winds; enjoy great friends. Randy Smyth did present an hour-long seminar to satisfy our trimaran appetites for speed. Randy can make sailors feel like they are going fast just standing on the dock. We had a great dinner at the club, and the Corsair folk "in the know" hit an ice cream shop before having more "porch talk" at the Pier Hotel (circa turn of 19th century).

Then came Saturday morning – Day Two. The sea breeze that hauntingly appeared late Friday afternoon filled in shortly after the AP had been displayed. AP down, racing within the hour. "Yee Hah!" We were headed out the harbor past the old square rigger to Course Charlie along with the early gaggle of monohulls.

I truly feel we were all late for the first start because we could not believe how short the line was. *Mark Twain* led out right on the first beat followed by *Vorpal Blade*, and *I Fly* finally tacked over carrying a screacher. We overstood, and *I Fly* managed a tack back to starboard on the layline. The course featured .8 mile, W L & W (Finish) legs, in about eight knots of breeze. Team Lopez won by about thirty seconds.

Race two offered similar conditions, and we snuck in between the committee boat and *Fifty – Fifty*, leaving *Rocketeer II* in the back row. We remained in touch with the trailing 28's until they scooted off downwind. Once we were in our own wind - band we were able to hold off *I Fly* and claim race two by fifty seconds or so. The new jib and spinnaker were giving us confidence. Raul, Joann, and Raquel have become even smoother since we raced last April, and once they slip away, forgoeet it! The next time you see them will be at dinner.

Race three was a real hoot... for *I Fly*. We found the gap at the committee boat again with the top three 28 R's below us, and Raul was in a low-middle lane with Ed Dixon on *Tri-Power*. We got up to speed then tacked out for our favorite right-hand corner. Of course, we were going to get a big header again, just ask Randy. *Rocketeer II* and two other 28 R's knew the header would be there. *I Fly* and *Tri-Power* tacked back to starboard for the middle of the course. We found ourselves trapped on port by the 28 R's on our hip and can't tack to cover *I Fly* without fouling *Rocketeer II*. "You bet," we kept telling ourselves, "We're gonna get headed." At least Pat Nugent on *Vorpal Blade* was out there with us. We finally tacked for the layline and saw no chance of redemption. *I Fly* and *Tri-Power* were flying across the top of the course, steaming, in a port tack lift. My heart dropped into the bilge, and then Nugent just sailed right over us downwind. Raul and Ed are gone! We slipped back through when *Vorpal* missed their weather spinnaker takedown and drifted outside the circle; however, boys and girls, we gave third right back to them when I missed our next tack.

The **TACK** by Raul Lopez, *Class Coordinator for the St. Pete NOOD's* (from Randy's seminar)

"Spinnaker take down – The technique involves using the whole trampoline (a unique feature of our boats). Our old system was to release the tack, then the sheet and lastly feed the top of the chute down to the person bringing the sail down in the front of the tramp.

In the new technique we leave the tack connected, the person taking down the chute grabs the lazy sheet and walks to the back of the tramp (holding down the clew with a knee or foot) pulling the sail back collapses the chute and keeps it from falling in the water. Next we release the halyard and pull down the back of the spinnaker. Once the sail is on the tramp, we release the tack and bag the sail. We tried this in light air and simply loved it... Not sure how it will work in heavy air... but intuitively... we think it will be an easier process."

A *Twain* crewmember, Nichole Buechler, from the USF sailing team and Pensacola Yacht Club, claimed that Bud and I talk to one another like an old married couple. Terri laughed out loud all the way to the finish. Bud Schumann and I have been sailing together for almost thirty years. His dad, Carl, was mark set for the first NACRA 5.2 Midwinters on Pensacola Bay in 1977. It was only fittin' that we sail together in the first C 24 Midwinters.

Well, soul-sailors, there we have it, give or take a wavy truth or two. When I got done dancin' with my sister, her friend, and my grandniece at the yacht club I arrived at the hotel to discover that the Lopez family, Ed and Louise Dixon, Bob Onsgaard, Rob Rimmer, and Jamie Livingston were sitting on the front porch of the Pier Hotel on a Saturday night after their ice cream party, telling story. What a day!

Sunday – Day Three, started out sunny and by the time the crews began to arrive on the dock, the sky turned into “blind mellow jelly” – fog style. The Race Committee ordered us out of the harbor so we could learn more about using our GPS toys and at least get to race back in, under power, for recovery and awards. We drifted around for a while in twilight zone conditions listening to the occasional radio chatter of some poor soul requesting coordinates for the RC vessel. One boy was from Texas and so was the radio operator. They were very entertaining, and almost brought the sun out and the wind to life. Friends and neighbors, I said “almost.”

With over a thousand people and almost two hundred boats on the water the RC finally announced they have abandoned for the day. No problem; we have almost five hours before awards and then a ten hour drive home. We ended up towing in a SR Max that had Mikki Gram, Terri's Adams Cup shipmate, aboard. I was amazed how nicely the four crew, four cycle, four horse did. Ever see the bumper sticker, “I'd rather be sailing?” Well, we hope to see you sailing with us next year.

Corsair24 Class Series Summary								
Pl	Sail	Skipper	From	Boat Name	1	2	3	T
1	102	Raul Lopez	Miami, FL	I Fly	1	2	1	4
2	2010	Bert Rice	Gulf Breeze, FL	Mark Twain	2	1	4	7
3	369	Edward Dixon	Marco Island, FL	Tri Power	5	5	2	12
4	319	Patrick Nugent	Palm Harbor, FL	Vorpal Blade	3	6	3	12
5	407	Kurt Gregory	St. Petersburg, FL	Key Wee	4	4	5	13
6	324	Lars Allebrik	Tampa, FL	Rhoda-Pascoda	6	3	6	15



ph. 1 Raul and family finish race one on his way to winning the 2006 Corsair 24 Midwinters with Rice in his wake. Team I Fly is only going to become faster. photo by Michael Zotzky



ph. 2 SPYC offered us these nice double-wide slips so we would not have to fold our hulls. Resting beside the Melges 32's also allowed us the opportunity to visit with our friends who were crewing aboard the boats. photo by Michael Zotzky



ph. 3 Terri Swift, Nichole Buechler, and Bud Schumann kept Mark Twain pointed forward. Usually, aboard Twain, it's the skipper that causes the compass to spin. photo by Joann Lopez