

Shope Shines at Florida Masters

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Looks like six weeks of practice sailing on Biscayne Bay and hanging out with Olympic hopefuls from several countries has made Peter Shope even more formidable! He dominated a very competitive fleet in blustery conditions, winning 5 of 6 races sailed at Palm Beach Sailing Club Feb 11 & 12. The Jack Swenson Memorial Trophy, in commemoration of the man who started the Royal Turkey Yacht Club and the Florida Masters, sailed for many years out of his house, is a treasured award. This 120th annual (OK, it just seems like that many!) regatta to determine who is the "Dirty Old Man of the Sea". – the alternative name for the perpetual award attracted 44 sailors from 13 states, St Bart's, Estonia, Denmark, Canada and Argentina.

Saturday, two races were sailed in the ocean outside Lake Worth inlet in NNW winds of 15 to 20 kts. The wind direction required the Race Committee to set up a line in 80 plus feet of water. With an unsteady wind, current and swells, getting a relatively square line was a definite challenge. Peter Shope began his series by port tacking the fleet and launching him to a huge lead which was never challenged in the first 4 legged windward leeward races. The fleet would not allow such a bold move in the second race, but nevertheless, Shope led the fleet around the race course once again. In both races there was a definite wind favoring the left side of the weather leg. However, this was somewhat offset by a stronger current on the right side. Both races saw several participants take swims in the warm waters of the Atlantic. Due to unsteady winds and some mechanical difficulties (thanks ethanol!)With mark boats, additional races could not be set so we headed home to fight our way through an outgoing current in the inlet on the way back to PBSC. After cleaning up, we enjoyed some fine hors d'oeuvre and a nice meal, along with our choice of adult beverages, as we relived our day on the water.

A cold front lowered our temperatures into the 50's – yeah that's really cold in Florida --and northerly wind forecasts in the mid 20's, persuaded the RC to run the races inside. Didn't hear many objections from the competitors! A northerly against the Gulf Stream makes for pretty interesting conditions! We sailed 4 more twice around windward leeward's. Many of the fleet who had not done so on Saturday, switched to Radials. Great Grand Master Joe Van Rossem pulled a Shope and port tacked the fleet in the first race of the day. However, the youngsters overcame the wily oldster and caught him near the top of the first leg. Otto Strandvig, who was one of several sailors taking turns trying to catch Shope, finally broke through in the 5th race to take the bullet. Otto sailed a great series, having a 3 as a throw out. That's the only thing Peter lost – he had a 4 for his throughout! There definitely was an elite group at the front of the pack as the results show. Full results are at:

http://www.regattanetwork.com/clubmgmt/applet_regatta_results.php?regatta_id=4770&show_1aser_masters=1

Now we move on to USSCMC, Jensen Beach, for Midweek Madness – Happy Valentine's Day!