

Sunfish Worlds 2009 a family affair

By Marjolein van Aanholt-Grol

What is more fun than sailing a Sunfish Worlds alone? Sailing the Worlds with your family and friends. The 1980 Sunfish World Champion Cor van Aanholt was charmed by the idea of President of the Curacao Sunfish Association Alex Roose to try to qualify for the 2009 Worlds with all the sailors in his family. Beside himself that would be wife Marjolein, and kids Philipine (17), Ard (15), Just (13) and Odile (11).



How it all started

When the kids were very young Cor took them along in the Sunfish. At the age of 3 Ard sailed his first regatta in a Sunfish on the lap of his father. When the kids got older Cor let them take the tiller extension to steer, while showing them what was happening during the races. Around the age of 6 they all started sailing in an Optimist. At the same time they started sailing the Sunfish with two young kids together in the boat.

The Curacao Sunfish Association even had to make rules about the total amount of

weight both sailors could have. During that period youth sailing became extremely popular in Curacao and top class coaches were invited to raise the level of Optimist sailors. Young Curacao sailors started to travel to international events in Optimist, Splash and Laser 4.7 and Laser Radial. In 2008 Curacao organized the North American Optimist Championship with 204 kids from 25 countries and 5 continents. And now these former Optimist kids are also sailing Sunfish. Every Saturday morning a group of 15 young sailors start their weekend with a Sunfish training at the Spanish water. At the local regatta's the much older experienced Sunfish sailors are not surprised anymore to be beaten once in a while by the fanatic teenagers.

Philipine van Aanholt who usually sails Laser Radial and Splash, clearly Curacao's best female sailor, qualified for the Worlds and was excited to try a different boat. Fifteen year old son Ard, in the middle of his puberty advised his mother, Marjolein, who sailed twice a Sunfish Worlds, not to participate. He had two reasons for this: A. he did not want his mother to mess up his starts and B. she would probably end up in the bottom half and therefore lower the total average score of team Curacao. He did not want to



be embarrassed by his mother. And if she was sailing who would take care of him? Big issues for a teenager. When teenagers Mathieu de By from the Netherlands and Fernando Monllor from Puerto Rico asked to team up with the Van Aanholt family, Marjolein decided to enjoy the Bahamas without sailing the Worlds. The youngest two kids had clinics and regattas in the Optimist and Byte and were still too light to sail the Sunfish all alone. So Cor ended up sailing the Worlds with his two teenage kids.



Bahamas Worlds, battle between father, son and daughter

For the first time in his life Cor sailed a major championship against his offspring. At all local regattas he had never been defeated by his son or his daughter. With his experience and talent he was always able to win the mostly short races. But how would he do against his talented and in physical good shape kids in a longer championship?

Philipine, Ard, Mathieu and Fernando first sailed the Junior event and Cor advised them with the rigging and analyzed the races with them afterwards. With Fernando second overall and Philipine third overall and first girl and Mathieu and Ard in the top ten, the teenagers were well prepared to start the Worlds. Cor, who turned 50 this year, was out of shape, so he had to rely on his amazing talent for sailing. Still he was looking forward to the family battle.

The wind in the Bahamas was much stronger than expected. This was thought to be an advantage for Cor, but 15 year old Ard proved differently. From day one Ard showed his dad that he was serious about the game. Surprising the Sunfish sailors with a race victory in the second race Ard started the championship well. At night in the rented house at the dinner table all races were fiercely analyzed with moving silverware and glasses being boats and marks. Within the Curacao



team bets were made who would be the best within the Van Aanholt family. Cor who is known for his good starts was surprised more than once to meet Philipine and Ard at the first mark. While Cor had to rely on his experience he had to work hard to stay in the top ten. The kids quickly adapted to the boat and were eager to prevail. The final score within the Van Aanholt Competition: 1. Ard (8th), Cor (10th) 3. Philipine (17th)

Looking at the difference in age in the top ten it can be concluded that this class is attractive to sailors varying in age. We saw top ten results for sailors ranging in age from 15 (Ard) to 50 (Malcolm and Cor). It would be great to see more families in the Sunfish class, as the boat is surely suitable for more family affairs.

"Sailing this Sunfish Worlds with my kids is very special to me. I'm immensely happy to be able to share this event with my kids", Cor concludes.