USSCA North Americans Recap and more!

The Sunfish Class Association

July 1, 2021

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Sunfish Sailors,

Looking back, 2020 was a challenging year for sailing. Beginning the year, we were able to host only one Regional Championship before the onset of Covid. In March, with the US shutting down and uncountable unknowns, we were faced with the difficult decision to cancel 2020 Midwinter Race Week. In the early months of shutdowns and lockdowns, we were forced to either cancel or postpone many major regattas including the 2020 North American Championships. As summer 2020 progressed, and we learned more about the pandemic, many regattas were able to reschedule. Thank you to all of you who organized or safely participated in regattas last summer. With your patience, willingness to adapt, and a fantastic hunger for Sunfish sailing, we were able promote local regattas, reschedule 2020 US National Championships at Midwinters at Bay Waveland Yacht Club, and salvage a fantastic end to sailing in 2020. In total, we were able to host 12 championship events.

As expected, our 2020 membership was slightly down from 2019. However, with all the regatta participation in the second half of the year, we found the Sunfish Class in a good position heading into the new year. People just wanted to sail.

With the arrival of 2021, a fresh sailing season, vaccines, and new knowledge about the spread of Covid we were ready for a strong 2021. As of the end of June, we've held 8 major events, with 10 more championships on the schedule, and more to come. We've already seen some of the highest participation in years and this has correlated with membership numbers, Sunfish Bible sales, and 82 sailors at the North American Championship at Lake Norman Yacht Club (https://www.regattanetwork.com/event/21847#_newsroom+results). With palpable buzz surrounding many of the regattas, I'm excited for the rest of the 2021 schedule. (https://www.sunfishclass.org/regattas/championship/c/27)
With a new decade comes a new class notice. It’s been over ten years since the USSCA Class Notice and regional World Championship berth allocation has been updated. At the end of 2020, the USSCA board approved changes to the USSCA Class Notice to better represent the regional membership of the class, providing for a 4-year rotation, and extra berths for the surging southeast region and Women’s North American Championships. As of 2021, two women will qualify for World Championships out of WNAs. (https://www.sunfishclass.org/documents/Final_Class_Notice_2021-2024.pdf).

With a further move towards inclusion, the Pan American Sailing Federation has approved an additional Sunfish event for women. We will now have two US Pan American competitors should we as a country qualify for the 2023 Pan Am games. This is a fantastic opportunity for the growth of Sunfish racing and is a near unprecedented move that we cannot take for granted.

A few rule changes have been implemented for 2021. Those of you at the recent North Americans may have seen competitors out there with modern digital compasses. Yes, we’ve finally moved ahead with the digital compass rule change. Furthermore, based on extensive discussions at our annual board meeting and a lack of replacement part availability, the USSCA board has passed a temporary rule allowing the use of 3rd party parts in class sanctioned Regional Championships until June of 2022. The exact wording as follows: “Due to parts shortage, allow 3rd-party parts at Regional World Qualifying Events until June 1, 2022. Exceptions are made at the discretion of the Measurer or their delegate. No exceptions shall be made for hulls, which must be class legal. Replacement parts shall not provide an obvious advantage. To be eligible for event awards or Worlds qualification, all parts must be class legal.” While Laser Performance develops their new Portugal factory and loft and irons out their supply issues, please continue to help fellow Sunfishers by directing them to our dedicated dealers who do have parts in stock.

Going forward, we need to continue to look for ways to keep Sunfish events competitive yet fun while engaging our audience with social media, live streaming, videos, and any other methods of interaction. If all goes to plan, we will be live streaming the 50th Sunfish World Championships this October. If you’re not sailing, I expect you to be tuning into every second of the broadcast. More information to come.

As we look forward, we are looking for host venues for championship events for 2022 and beyond. It’s never too early to start planning a phenomenal event. If your sailing club might be interested in hosting an event, please reach out to your regional representative, our regatta coordinator, me, or any of the other board members and we can work with you to get an event to your club! (https://www.sunfishclass.org/about/class-leadership/us-board)

I look forward to sailing with all of you soon!

Happy sailing,

Will Kresic

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2021 ISCA Worlds Update

As of today, there are 96 sailors registered to sail in the 2021 Worlds this October in Sarasota, FL. from a dozen different countries. Thanks to Sunfish Direct. who is providing 100 new Sunfish for this Championship, and the work that Cindy Clifton and her team at the Sarasota Sailing Squadron are doing, this is shaping-up to be the best Worlds ever.

If you have registered...but NOT paid your entry and charter fee, TODAY is the last day you have to pay and secure your berth for the Worlds. Don't delay! We have a waiting list of over 25 sailors chomping at the bit to sail in the Worlds so you had better act immediately if you haven't paid but plan to sail.

Questions, contact Sunfish Administrator Buttons Padin.

2021 Sunfish North American Championship Recap

Lake Norman Yacht Club, led by event chair John Butine, executed the perfect USSCA NAs over the weekend of June 11-13. A resounding post-pandemic total of 83 boats registered to sail making it the largest Sunfish fleet in memory. Sailed over three days on beautiful (yet tricky) Lake Norman, a total of eight races were sailed. As one would expect, the starting line for a fleet this large was much longer than most Sunfish sailors are used to; and, with the wind shifting considerably, being at one end of the line for the start could be a very good or very bad thing. There is a comment at the end of this newsletter on how Nick Johnstone opened the regatta with an epic port tack start crossing the entire fleet to everyone’s awe (Nick finished 16th overall).
As is the case with Championships of this magnitude, Sunfish sailors came from far and near. In addition to all the American sailors, Jose Hernandez (GUA), Caterina Romero (PER), and Juan Carlos Canizalez (GUA) were on the course. Jose finished a close second (two points out of first), Caterina ended up fourth, and Juan Carlos eighth. But in the end, it was Conner Blouin atop the leaderboard sealing the championship by winning the final two races. Conner has written a “Words of Wisdom” article based on this win that is presented below with the complete document on the Class website.

Completing the top finishers were Mike Ingham in third with 35 points. A large “thank you” goes to Mike who gave an insightful and informative briefing the day before racing started sharing some of the tips and techniques that have made him a champion sailor. (Right) Mike was also the top Master.
In fifth was Eugene Schmitt (second master - left) how made this Championship especially meaningful by bring along his son, Keegan, for his first major Sunfish regatta. While Eugene was looking towards the front of the fleet, you know he also had one eye looking back to check on Keegan!
In sixth was New Englander Bill Brangiforte followed by last year’s NAs Champ Amanda Callahan (winning a tie breaker with Juan Carlos). Mark Kastel, top Grand Master followed in ninth with Doug Kaukeinen rounding out the top ten.

The biggest winner, however, was the guy that finished a respectable 21st after having measured-in over 80 boats and arranged for the entire event: John Butine. John had an able committee supporting him and it showed as the regatta was a total success.

Results
Conner Blouin’s Words of Wisdom
Adjusting to Shifty Lake Conditions

By Conner Blouin, 2021 Sunfish North Americans Champion
When sailing in events, there is a natural inclination to try to predict how the wind is going to shift at every turn. This is also known as a pure wind strategy-based approach to racing. Depending on the venue, sailing with a pure wind strategy approach can produce good results. However, it is always important to understand that in any sailing situation, you are dealing with mother nature. Bays and oceans may often have predictable patterns, but when you move to a lake venue, it is harder to apply this approach with consistency.

When I showed up for the practice day at Lake Norman, it was staggering not only how quickly the wind pressure changed from drifting to hiking, but also how different the wind was between boats 30 feet away from each other. This is very typical on small lakes and other venues where the wind is coming directly off the land. The land patterns bend the wind in strange and unpredictable ways, and often prevent you from seeing the changes on the water until it is too late. When wind conditions are frustrating and unpredictable, you need to have the ability to switch from a wind strategy approach to a tactical approach.

A tactical approach takes into consideration your position compared to where other boats are on the course, while wind strategy focuses primarily on the next shift. This difference in approach reminds me of a common poker saying: “You can play the cards, or you can play the person across from you.” Someone playing the cards will look at their hand, count cards, calculate odds, and make decisions based purely on percentages. This approach is remarkably similar to wind strategy. If you are exceptional at it, you will tilt the odds in your favor, but ultimately you are at the mercy of numbers. The person playing the other opponents will remain mindful of their cards, but pay more attention to the other players: How many cards are they asking for? Are they raising or checking? How do they react to what they are drawing? I am not a poker player, but this seems more like the tactical approach to sailing. You can never completely throw away the wind strategy approach, just like you can’t completely throw away odds in poker, but there are several tools you can add to your approach to sailing on the tactical side that will make you more consistent in lake sailing conditions.

Read the full story
Nautalytics is an official sponsor of the Sunfish Class and many of their digital compasses were seen at the recent North American Championship. The overwhelming reaction to the Nautalytics digital compass and countdown timer is that they are easy to read and help you sail more tactically. If you'd like to up your game, go to https://www.nautalytics.com/

Upcoming Events

The 50th Annual World’s Longest Sunfish Race, Around Shelter Island NY

Southold Yacht Club

July 10

Don’t Miss Out!
To register go to SoutholdYachtClub.com. Don’t miss out! This is a bucket-list event for sailors, a unique nautical marathon. Each registered sailor receives a souvenir T shirt, a personalized commemorative certificate suitable for framing, 1 party ticket, 1 raffle ticket, and a chance to win a trophy! Divisions are adult and adult doubles, youth and youth doubles.

Need more incentive? Laser Performance, makers of the Sunfish and sponsors of the event have donated *one new Sunfish* to be raffled off to sailors only! Two brand-new race sails, also. Only registered sailors will receive one raffle ticket each, so the odds of winning are in your favor! Don’t have a Sunfish? You can charter one from The Dinghy Shop (details on the last page of the NOR).

There will be no on-site registration. Registration closes July 9, midnight.

To register go to SoutholdYachtClub.com SoutholdYachtClub.com.

Questions: Email BMFbethfleisher@gmail.com

2021 Sunfish Women’s North American Championship

September 24-26

Columbia Sailing Club on Lake Murray
Columbia, SC

For Female Competitors ONLY … sorry, guys. But you are certainly welcome to travel to Lake Murray to help and cheer on the competitors!

Register today at www.regattanetwork.com/event/21514

Questions? Please contact Margaret Clarkson at margaretclarkson4@gmail.com

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2021 USSCA CLASS OFFICER ELECTION RESULTS

Every year, half of the USSCA Class officers are elected or reelected. This way there is always a carryover of knowledge and processes. This year, the following people were elected to 2-year terms:

Secretary – Emily Wagner
Advisory Council (two) – Jim Koehler, John Condon
Masters Events Coordinator – Brian McGinnis
Women’s Events Coordinator – Gail Hausler
Nominations Coordinator – Tom Katterheinrich
Midwest Region Rep – Gail Turluck
Southwest Region Rep – Rick Keffer
West Region Rep – Jeff Bryant
Gulf Coast Region Rep – Position Vacant (if interested, contact Will Kresic)

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Regatta Reports

Sailing in God’s Country Regatta 2021

by Mark Kastel

Competitors started arriving at the La Crosse Sailing Club (Wisconsin), located on a peninsula that juts out into Lake Onalaska, a dammed-up section of the Mississippi River in the beautiful Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge, on Friday evening May 14. Some chose to camp on site and others stayed in nearby hotels. Competitors from five states (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio) were treated to comfortable temperatures around 70 degrees and near-steady breezes ranging from 5-15 mph.

The 13 boats that hit the starting line on Saturday in the first day of the event saw tight competition, with international class president, Rich Chapman, at the top of the leaderboard and regatta organizer, Mark Kastel, in second. Factoring in a throw-out, local Laser ace, Kurt Schroeder (who had never set foot in a Sunfish before that afternoon), was a close third. Despite having organized the regatta and helped conduct the skippers meeting, Kastel, while well ahead in one of the races, led about half the fleet around the wrong mark before he realized his error (pretty much going from first to last). Because a good section of the fleet didn’t recognize the error initially figuring that Kastel knew where he was going, officials decided to throw that race out in fairness, based on the confusion.

Sunday morning had a bit more breeze and saw Kastel winning four of the six races to close the gap with Chapman. But it wasn’t quite enough. Rich’s legendary and steady consistency bested Mark by three points over the 13 20-minute races sailed over the two days.

The goal of maximum fun and maximum practice set for the first Midwest regatta of the year was delivered by crackerjack race management provided by La Crosse Laser Fleet members Ken Johnson and Dean and Marie French. Snacks and meals were all-organic, with locally raised grass-fed steak and roasted vegetables expertly prepared by former club Commodore Bill Plzak. Current Commodore, Nancy Sojka, and her husband Ted, acted as photographers and helped present awards to the top six finishers, along with a special master’s trophy to Mike West, from Highland Park, Illinois, competing in his first Midwest Regatta as a Senior Master (80+). Leland Brode, the designer of RaceLog, handled scoring duties in addition to finishing in third place. A big thank you to everyone who made the first annual Sailing in God’s Country Regatta possible, especially the participants from far and wide. We couldn’t have done it without you!

Results with Point Totals (after throw out)

1. Richard Chapman 17 (top Master)
2. Mark Kastel                  20         (top Grand Master)
3. Leland Brode               48         (top Great Grand Master)
4. Sean Strasser               57
5. Dave Michals               62
6. Tom Katterheinrich     76
7. Mike West                   91         (top Senior Master)
8. Kurt Schroeder              93
9. David Hanselman            93
10. Jim Irwin                  99
11. Doug Warren               102
12. Dave Dennison             109
13. Bill Strasser             115

Results

Photos

2021 NC Governor's Cup Regatta
Carolina Sailing Club

Results are final as of 10:44 on June 21, 2021

Sunfish FLEET

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New England Sunfish Regionals #1
Barrington Yacht Club, Barrington, RI
June 19-20, 2021

Twenty-six competitors sailed during one of the first warm weekends of the season. But the water was cold which made for good conditions for a sea breeze which never grew.

With a full moon, a very strong current forced sailors to the left shore to avoid it. Sailing conditions for the weekend were light, shifty southerlies, lots of velocity difference over the course. Nice surfing waves early on Sat. until the wind died, then nothing over 10mph after that.
In the end, it was Amanda Callahan with seven bullets walking away with the championship. Bill Brangiforte had 22 points for second and Sydney Karnovsky totaled 25 points for third.

https://yachtscoring.com/event_results_cumulative.cfm?eid=14525

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Meet the Member

(Editor’s Note: I met Lee Parks in 1992 when I was encouraged to sail against stiffer competition at a Worlds-qualifying event. Not knowing how to even start this process, an Austin Yacht Club friend, Vic Manning, called Lee and asked if she had room for a new female Sunfish sailor to stay with her at her family’s home on Wequaquet Lake in Massachusetts for that year’s New England Regional Regatta. The answer was a resounding, “YES, of course!” And nothing about Lee’s welcoming exuberance and gracious ability to make one feel wanted and important has changed since then. No one has any idea how much Lee has done for the Sunfish Class starting with her administrative contributions that basically help set up the Class By-Laws and Constitution to her championship level of sailing such as being our Women’s Sunfish North American Champion in 1987 (Rehoboth Beach) and 1994 (Austin Yacht Club). But for Lee, winning trophies has never been her focus. It’s been all about the people. Oh, and the stories we could tell! Meet Lee Parks …)

by Lee Parks

Like many New England families in the 60s, we had a summer cottage on a lake. Summers were magical -- there were literally hundreds of Sailfish on our small lake. Our first boat was a Sunfish, circa 1965 – blue deck, white bow strips and red/white sail -- #12702. In 1968, a new instructor revolutionized the youth program at the local yacht club. We travelled to interclubs, beating youth teams all over the Cape no matter what boats we sailed in. Traveling to regattas was routine long before I could drive, and we all looked forward to the annual trek to the North Americans. We loved sailing, the competition and especially the camaraderie and fun times that go along with it.
The 1970 NAs in Winnetka (IL) was my first major event. We caravanned to Chicago, growing to more than a dozen cars and trailers by the time we hit the Illinois border at dusk. The trouble was that many of us didn’t have trailer lights that worked. The first car got pulled over and the rest of us followed. Instead of writing tickets, the police arranged a “blue light escort” through Chicago to our destination, Lloyd Park.

Lee’s Super Sail Loft was created after the 1972 Worlds in Bermuda. For the first time, Sunfish sails had windows. Using my sewing skills and my mother’s connections (Ted “Hoodie” Hood Sr. was her boss at Monsanto), we copied the window. This blossomed into a very lucrative summer job in high school and college.

I moved to Denver after college to enjoy my other passion, skiing. There was very little Sunfish competition out west so I moved back east a few years later. That’s when I got a phone call that changed my career. It was from Steve Baker who asked, “How’d you like to go to regattas and get paid for it?” I worked for AMF Alcort for four years in the early 80s before AMF was raided by Irwin Jacobs. Alcort was spun off to a group of investors from Boston (see The Sunfish Bible for details). One of the things I’m proudest of is obtaining International Status for the Class so that Sunfish could compete in the Pan Am Games.

Having made so many friends in the sailing community during my Alcort years, it was natural that I join the staff at the US Yacht Racing Union (now US Sailing) where I spent the bulk of my career. I’ve raced in 18 Sunfish World Championships and many more North American, Midwinter and local regattas in my 50+ years in the Class. During that time, I formed many life-long friendships. The Sunfish Class is like a second family and every regatta is like a reunion.

Upon retirement, I thought I had experienced everything the Class had to offer. But no. I joined the Luffing Lassies at the Sarasota Sailing Squadron, a group of ladies that are passionate about sailing and incredibly supportive of their peers. The Lassies exemplify the warm, welcoming culture of the Class that we all take pride in.

I look forward to our paths crossing at another regatta real soon. Lee

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Noteworthy Tribute from a Longtime Sunfish Advocate

By Peter Johnstone (recently posted on Facebook)

My son Nick continually delivers pleasant surprises. In his first few minutes of ever being in a Sunfish, he port tacked the 87 boat fleet yesterday at the North American Championship on Lake Norman in North Carolina, and won the first race. This brings tears of laughter, joy, and a flood of memories. The Sunfish is a special boat and class to our family. My siblings and I grew up sailing Sunfish on Lake Michigan. In the mid-1970’s my dad moved us to Connecticut so he could become VP of Marketing for AMF Alcort. In 1991, I led a buyout of the Sunfish and Laser brands and turned those bankrupt brands around. Running those brands in the 1990’s was an absolute honor and joy. My business partners were Tom Whidden, Gary Jobson, Bill Richmond and my college sailing
teammate and Sunfish World Champion Bruce Sutphen. At every sailing team practice, and every major regatta, Bruce would make a point to port tack the fleet whenever possible, including at two Sunfish Worlds. When he succeeded, he would yell out “BRA!”. In Bruce’s memory, our teammate Adam Werblow organized several of us to contribute an FJ in his honor at Connecticut College. Cheers and love to Nick, to the awesome Sunfish Class, and to fond memories of Bruce. The Sunfish keeps providing pure joy to so many.

By Tom Payne (posted on Facebook)

In case you missed it, Citadel Sailing coach Nick Johnstone pulled off a textbook port-tack start in Race One. He tacked right at the pin just as the horn sounded and was G-O-N-E. He had a slim lead over Hernandez at the first mark and managed to hold on until just after the second windward rounding when Hernandez slipped by. Johnstone was not done; "I did some match racing moves and managed to get by him." The win was even more impressive when you consider that it was his first time in a Sunfish. The first photo was taken only moments after the start and it’s obvious that no one is going to cross Johnstone. Most of the fleet is out-of-frame to the right. — with Nick Johnstone.

Nick Johnstone's killer port tack start.