Upcoming Championship Dates

- **2018 ISCA South American & Caribbean Championship** - Apr. 28-May 1, Tubura (Barranquilla) Colombia
- **2018 USSCA Mid-Atlantic Regionals 1** - June 9-10, Metedéconk River Yacht Club, Brick, NJ
- **2018 USSCA New England Regionals 1** June 16-17, Hyannis Yacht Club, Hyannis, MA
- **2018 USSCA NY Upstate Regionals** - June 23-24, Rochester Canoe Club
- **2018 USSCA Mid-Atlantic Regionals 2** - July 14-15, Lewes Yacht Club, Lewes, DE
- **2018 USSCA New England Regionals 2** July 21-22, Wequaquet Yacht Club, Centerville, MA
- **2018 USSCA Youth North American Championship** - July 30-Aug. 1, Lake Bluff Yacht Club, Lake Bluff, IL.
- **2018 USSCA North American Championship** - Aug. 1-4, Lake Bluff Yacht Club, Lake Bluff, IL.
- **2018 USSCA NY Downstate Regionals** June 11-12, Sayville Yacht Club, Blue Point, NY
- **2018 USSCA Western Regionals** - Aug. 18-19, Mission Bay Yacht Club, San Diego, CA
- **2018 USSCA Masters Championship** - Sept. 14-16, Canandaigua Yacht Club, Canandaigua, NY
- **2018 USSCA Women’s National Championship** - Sept. 28-30, Austin Yacht Club, Austin, TX
- **2018 ISCA Youth World Championship** Oct. 3-6, Carolina Yacht Club, Wrightsville Beach, NC
- **2018 ISCA World Championship** - Oct. 6-12, Carolina Yacht Club, Wrightsville Beach, NC

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From the Editor...

Vicki Palmer

The Windward Leg is the official newsletter of the International Sunfish Class Association and will again be a digital publication. So be sure the Sunfish Class Office has your current email address.

I want to thank those who took the time to submit articles, photos and race results to me.

Important: It is the responsibility of the regatta host or chairperson to submit results, article and photos to the editor, or they might be accidentally excluded from the next publication. Please submit to:

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Seeing more input from our Sunfish Class members would be a bonus!

Let’s hear from you!!!

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To be announced

Eight Bells to Our Own Vic Manning ...

The Sunfish family mourns the loss of Vic Manning who passed away at the age of 72 on January 9, 2018 of a heart attack. Vic served as USSCA President and was the Southwest Regional Rep until he retired from that position last year. A tribute to Vic’s life was held on January 15 at the Austin Yacht Club. So many of his long-time friends attended and shared stories of how he touched their lives in some way. If there was a volunteer job or task, Vic took it on including sitting by the hospital bed of several friends with terminal illnesses. Our hearts go out to his wife Pat who was our USSCA/ISCA Treasurer for 20+ years and to his daughters Jennifer and Nicole and Nicole’s daughter Kayla. Vic’s ashes will be spread in a ceremony on Lake Travis on June 18 which would have been Vic and Pat’s 51st wedding anniversary. Sail #80119 will forever dash across the start lines with Vic smiling as he beats us to the finish line but still cheering us on. Vic, you left us too soon.
Dear Sunfish Sailors,

We’ll, it looks like spring is finally making an appearance here in the upper Midwest. That means it’s time to uncover the boats, check over the gear and get ready for splash down in another few weeks. As usual, there is a full docket of regattas awaiting your participation. I’m very excited to have my home club, Lake Bluff Yacht Club, as the host of this year’s North American Championships. I’d love to see many of you come out and enjoy the awesome sailing on the Great Lakes and the awesome hospitality of our club. Lake Bluff always puts on a great show. From quality racing to housing provided for as many sailors as possible, this is going to be a regatta to remember. Why not come out and sail?

The biggest news from the winter is the ongoing negotiations with LP. Larry Mass and the members of the World Council have done a great job of working with our attorneys to come up with a document that both sides can agree upon. They hope to have a signed agreement signed very soon.

Finally, I would like to, once again, encourage you to renew your class membership and find another sailor to join with you. Even better, why not volunteer for the USSCA or ISCA board? Getting involved in the class is very rewarding and allows you to have a voice in how the class operates. If you’re interested, please contact me or the class office.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer of racing, day sailing or just thinking about sailing! I’m looking forward to seeing many of you at the NA’s!

Smooth Sailing!

Rich Chapman, USSCA President

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USSCA North American Championships — July 30-August 4, Lake Bluff, IL

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Eight Bells: Bruce Sutphen — 1965-2018

A champion both on and off the water, Bruce Sutphen passed away on February 22, 2018 after a year-long battle with myeloma cancer. Bruce won the Sunfish World Championship in 1987 in Aruba and was a friend and inspiration to so many. Peter Johnstone, lead partner and President of Sunfish Laser from 1991-1997, shared, “…Bruce made me laugh harder than anyone from college onward. He could find the light through any tough situation, and he was bright as anyone. He helped design America’s Cup yachts, and then started a new career in deep undersea exploration where he engineered equipment that holds a deepest solo dive record. Life got in the way of catching up more regularly, which I greatly regret. Bruce remains one of the more colorful, genuine and original people I have known. Make the winds be strong on his quarter up above. We are all better for having known and enjoyed his presence.” Scott Kyle, two-time Sunfish World Champion and past USSCA President, remembers, “…Bruce was a great friend and competitor, possessing the rare dual quality of someone you wanted to hang out with on land, but respected and didn’t mind getting beat by on the water since his character was pure gold. Bruce was always generous with his time and smile. He was also one of the funniest people I ever met. I still tell friends about his 1987 World Sunfish Champs award speech. I was so proud he accomplished our childhood dream of becoming a world champion, and proud still to call him my friend. He will be missed by many.”

From everyone in the Sunfish family, our heartfelt sorrow goes out to Bruce’s family.
The 2018 sailing season is finally here. It has been a long and cold winter and we are anxious to get back in our Sunfish for another racing season. I am happy to announce that on Friday April 27, 2018 ISCA has reached a Trademark Agreement with Velum, the owner of the trademark, not to be confused with Laser Performance (LP) the Builder. This is only a Trademark Agreement that will allow ISCA to use the Sunfish logo and the word Sunfish in the prescribed font. Any items in the original Agreement that did not deal directly with the trademark were removed. This Agreement, previously approved by the World Council, allows ISCA to operate as an independent Class Association while also enabling ISCA and LP to move forward and collaborate in growing the Class in both size and geography.

What this agreement does not do, however, is solve the problem of Sunfish charter boats. World Championship overseas venues still pose a challenge for charter boats. Right now, without Builder support, we could be relegated to World Championships in the U.S. We are working hard to find solutions for Bonaire and Martinique. Laser Performance has expressed interest in supporting ISCA and holding World Championships in Asia and Europe. I am hopeful and encouraged that Laser Performance will help provide charter boat support going forward. If not, ISCA will have to look elsewhere.

As we all try to move this Class forward, I am asking all members to consider helping the Class by volunteering for an office or committee. We have had the same volunteers for many years who have continued to donate their time and energy to run this Class. It is time that we add some new members to the World Council. If anyone would like to get involved and volunteer, we have several positions open. Having an aging class and an old boat design presents several challenges in growing this Class, especially with bringing young sailors into this Class. It is vital to the survival of our Class that all of you help promote ISCA at regattas and at your yacht clubs.

In an effort to get more interest and participation, this year’s World Championship will be a bring-your-own-boat regatta and has been increased to 100 boats. Charters will be available for those sailors who cannot bring their own boat. I would like to see the 2018 ISCA World Championships filled. If you have not qualified for the World Championships and would like to compete, I encourage you to register as an at-large entry. Wrightsville Beach is one of the best ocean venues on the east coast, and the Carolina Yacht Club won the St. Petersburg’s trophy last year which is awarded to the Club that hosted the most outstanding event in 2017.

Lastly, I want to thank Rob Eberle for his service as ISCA Chief Measurer. Rob has informed me that he will retire as the ISCA Chief Measurer after the World Championships this year. This concludes 10 years of service of outstanding service to the Class. Rob, always the professional, took the job of Class Measurer very seriously and traveled to all of the regattas on his own dime. Rob was instrumental in getting me involved in the Class and was always available to share his knowledge with anyone who asked for help. Rob is an excellent ambassador of our class. I want to say, “Thank you, Rob, and while we will miss you as Chief Measurer we look forward to seeing you on the race course.”

Now that we have put the Trademark Agreement astern we can focus on the 2018 World Championships. I look forward to seeing many of you at this year’s ISCA World Championships scheduled for Oct. 3-6 for the ISCA Youth World Championship and Oct. 6-12 for the ISCA World Championship in Wrightsville Beach, NC.

Fair Winds and Following Seas,

Laurence H. Mass
Sunfish Sailor Helps Save a Heart Attack Victim

Personal Account as shared by June Rose (JR) Futcher ...

There was an emergency during a regatta in late January, InterClub MW annual. And JR played a major role. She had been recruited for the safety/tow vessel. A 45-year old sailor collapsed from a heart attack and was dying right before their eyes. JR knew his situation was dire and took control to execute rescue breathing and stabilize him while waiting for emergency services. JR said this was an incredibly frightening moment holding his life in their hands and getting him to breath again.

JR had training in emergency field services and has had life saving training for many years as a sailing instructor. An emergency situation like this required immediate action with no time to think. The situation was that bad. JR and the rescue team responded swiftly knowing there were only seconds to save him.

Once the paramedics arrived and took over, they were able to stabilize him using extreme measures and then took him to a local hospital emergency room.

This 45-year old sailor had just won the 505 worlds' regatta with his team mate in Annapolis. And thanks to JR and the rescue team efforts, this young man will be around to sail and win many more regattas in his lifetime.

You Help Us Be Who We Are ...

Yes, that means YOU!! Whether you’ve participated in heroic life-saving emergencies or helped teach new Sunfish sailors some rigging techniques, we are a better Class because of YOU. And every effort you perform makes us a stronger Class.

There are ways for everyone to contribute to help keep us strong. Quite simply, we can’t remain strong and grow our Class without YOU. There are ways for everyone to help:

* Promote Sunfish sailing at your Clubs,
* Encourage new sailors to join our Class,
* Participate in local and major out-of-town regattas,
* Help a Sunfish sailor revive an “older” racing Sunfish,
* Help organize a Sunfish event,
* Volunteer to help on a Committee,
* Serve on the USSCA or ISCA Board of Directors (we need YOU!),
* Submit event articles and photos for publication on the web and in the Windward Leg,
* Set a goal of getting at least one new Youth sailor to participate in Sunfish events,
* Teach a Sunfish sailing clinic at your Club,
* Hold a Sunfish rigging clinic at your Club,
* Help us find worthy candidates for the Sunfish Youth and Women scholarships we now have available, and
* Recommend new ways for us to promote Sunfish sailing and encourage new memberships.
Thirty-five brave sailors attended the inaugural 2018 ISCA Masters World Championship at St. Andrews Bay Yacht Club March 17 – 20. Competitors endured a mixture of weather conditions over three days of racing which included light and moderate shifty breezes, sunny skies, morning fog, rain, and the complex currents of Saint Andrews Bay.

Eric Oetgen (GA) took the lead on day 2 after the throw-out came into effect and never looked back. Former ISCA World Champion Paul-Jon Patin (NY) recovered from a slow start and put on a strong challenge, but could not catch Oetgen’s 10-point lead. Martin Willard (NC) finished 3rd, while former ISCA World Champion Donnie Martinborough (Nassau, Bahamas) took 4th overall. Gail Murphy-Heausler (FL) finished 5th and earned the top female spot and was also 1st in the Grand Masters Division.

In the Senior Masters Division, Dick Tillman (FL) edged out Don Bergman (MI) to take the top spot. Other winners include Joe Blouin (FL), Great Grand Masters division. 2018 ISCA Master World Champion Oetgen also took the Masters Division.

Overwhelmingly, sailors noted that St. Andrews Bay Yacht Club and its team of volunteers did a top-notch job organizing and promoting this event on local and social media. Event Chair Christine Reiss brought together staff, volunteers, and local officials to create a professionally-organized event and secured sponsorships by Destination Panama City, B&C Technologies and Coral Reef Sailing Apparel which made it possible to invite a team of international sailing judges to umpire the regatta. Principal Race Officer William Zehner ran the on-the-water courses for competitors.

The International Sunfish® Master Regatta was recently rebranded as the ISCA Master World Championship to help boost the Class' credibility by having a 3rd World title in addition to the Open and Youth World Championships.

Special Tribute to St. Andrews Bay Yacht, Chairperson Chris Reiss and her staff of dedicated helpers, Photographer Susanna Russell, and the hardworking and highly capable Race Committee personnel. Chairperson Chris Reiss shared, “First of all, it is important to mention that the regattas were both made possible with the support of a generous grant from Destination Panama City (DPC), the local tourism agency for Panama City (whose tagline is “Where Life Sets Sail”). It allowed St. Andrews Bay Yacht Club to keep the entry fees for the events low because DPC’s grant covered the cost of bringing in the required internationally certified judges. Destination Panama City and the local community have been extraordinarily supportive of sailing events. Not only does DPC and our community love sailors, they have demonstrated that they are willing to invest in bringing high quality sailing events to the gorgeous waters of Panama City. And the fabulous sailing conditions on St. Andrews Bay, combined with a supportive community, makes for an unbeatable combination for the very best sailing events.”

In the cover photo with Alonso Collantes, is St. Andrew Bay Yacht Club Fleet Captain, Rob Johnson. In addition to being the Club’s Fleet Captain, Rob is one of the club’s most loyal race committee volunteers. He drives the Signal Boat for all our regattas, and he is also the designated timer for the start sequence. He also helps call the finishes. For the recent Sunfish events, he also coordinated the provision of rental boats to all the coaches who traveled to Panama City for the regatta. Although he is a racer himself, he understands the importance of giving generously of his time to serve on race committee so that others can enjoy racing, as well.

In many of the photos with the Mid-Winters winners is St. Andrews Bay Yacht Club Rear Commodore, Morgan Hurst. During the Sunfish regattas, Morgan helped on our safety boats, and he also spent one day assisting on the Signal Boat. He is working towards his certification as a sailing judge, and at the request of the events’ international judges, sat as a fifth judge during protest hearings.
2018 ISCA Masters World Championship Photo Album
2018 ISCA Masters World Championship Photo Album
## 2018 ISCA Masters World Championship

Final Results — 10 Races, 1 Throwout

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12-Spring 2018
### 2018 ISCA Masters World Championship
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- Throwout
- M = Master (50-59)
- GM = Grand Master (60-69)
- GGM = Great Grand Master (70-79)
- SM = Senior Master (80+)
Peru’s Alonso Collantes Wins 2018 USSCA National Championship at Mid-Winters

Reigning World Champion Alonso Collantes saved his best performance for the last day of the regatta to take home the 2018 Midwinters Championship. After ten races, former World Champ Jonathan Martinetti and Alonso Collantes were tied at 42 points while David Hernandez had 43. The eleventh and last race was going to be a three-way match to determine first, second, and third overall.

After rounding the first leeward gate, Hernandez was second, Martinetti third, and Collantes fourth. Martinetti was yellow flagged for the second time in the regatta and had to retire from the race, paving the way for Collantes to closely follow Hernandez around the race course and finish one boat behind to win the tie-breaker.

Martin Alsogaray had to survive a broken outhaul end-cap, but benefited from Martinetti’s RET on the last race to take third overall. Divisional awards went to Caterina Romero - top female and 5th overall, Eugene Schmitt - top master and 6th overall, and Adriana Barron - top youth and 10th overall.

Guatemala, Argentina, and Ecuador clinched the three 2019 Pan Am Games berths and will be joining host country Peru next year. Remaining Pan Am Games berths will be decided at the 2018 South Americans in Colombia on April 28-May 1 and the 2018 North Americans in Waukegan, Illinois on August 1-4.

Principal Race Officer and past US Class President Clinton Edwards was pleased to have completed all the scheduled eleven races in three days of sailing. St. Andrews Bay Yacht Club delivered again another great event following the success of 2018 ISCA World Masters earlier in the week. Event Chair Christine Reiss and the StABYC race committee, staff, and volunteers demonstrated that they are open for business and ready to host major sailing events in the near future.

The International and the United States Sunfish® Class Associations would like to thank StABYC and sponsors Destination Panama City, B&C Technologies, and Coral Reef Sailing Apparel.
2018 USSCA National Championship at Mid-Winters
Winners (cont’d)

Jesus Bailon, ECU — 4th Overall

Caterina Romero, PER — 5th Overall & Top Female

Adriana Barron, PER — 1st Place Youth

Eugene Schmitt, USA — 1st Place Masters

Chris Reiss, Chairperson, ISCA Masters World Championship and USSCA National Championship at Mid-Winters ... What an undertaking! And what a smile! Thanks to Chris’ exceptional organizational skills and having a dynamite crew to help from the professional photographer to the outstanding Race Committee to the Club members and staff who handled things with ease. Thank you Chris! And thank you everyone at St. Andrews Bay Yacht Club who made this event so memorable.
# 2018 USSCA National Championship at Mid-Winters

**Final Results — 11 Races, 1 Throwout — PanAm Qualifier**

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16-Spring 2018
### 2018 USSCA National Championship at Mid-Winters
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**Top Master**—Eugene Schmitt, USA  
**Top Youth**—Adriana Barron, PER
EDITOR'S NOTE … Let me apologize here for not identifying the sailors in the photos. Rather than look as though I'm showing favoritism by ID'ing those I do know, I'm going to err on the side of not showing anyone's identity. If I attend enough World and National Championships I someday hope to recognize everyone at a glance! Why? Because they are all so awesome!

Susanna Russell, Event Photographer, Waterline Photography

Media Boat at Events (below)

Race Committee & Support Team

Welcome Sunfish® Sailors!

Bienvenidos Navegantes!
2018 USSCA National Championship at Mid-Winters
!! Lights / Camera / Action !! (cont’d)

Team Guatemala

Team Peru
2018 USSCA National Championship at Mid-Winters
!! Lights / Camera / Action !! (cont’d)

Team Ecuador
2018 USSCA National Championship at Mid-Winters
!! Lights / Camera / Action !! (cont’d)
2018 USSCA National Championship at Mid-Winters
!! Lights / Camera / Action !! (cont’d)
Sunfish 7500 = Midlife Crisis

By Mark Kastel

This is part memoir and part travel log. The story of how I ended up back, more enthusiastic than ever about the Sunfish, the boat and the class, after a hiatus of almost 45 years.

I’d been thinking about buying a Sunfish for at least a decade. I love racing small boats and there are fewer and fewer options to do so. After moving to Wisconsin 30 years ago, with a Lightning and Thistle, isolated from any other fleets and my regular crew down in Chicago, I’ve concentrated on racing a Laser for the last three decades.

I like to joke that here in La Crosse, Wisconsin, on the Mississippi, we have the largest (per capita) active laser Fleet in the country with about 12 boats in a city of 50,000. And there have been, historically, at least a dozen regattas a year in the district between Chicago and Minneapolis. But as the number of events, and competitors has waned, as in many other one-design classes, I thought about a Sunfish to add just a couple of extra regattas opportunities a year.

I sailed the 1998 Masters at Highland Park, Illinois on Lake Michigan cajoled into doing so with a tired old borrowed boat that my longtime friend Bob Findlay could still create magic in. And then someone lent me a boat to race at the Johnson Slough Oktoberfest regatta six years ago. That’s when I started seriously thinking about getting another Fish.

History: The Joy and Independence of a Young Boy in a Sunfish

My first boat was a bright red wood Sailfish that had washed ashore on a beach near where I lived. Pretty excited, at about 10 or 11 years old, my father allowed me to keep it only after we put ads in a number of the local papers seeking the rightful owner (somewhat perfunctory as the boat could have drifted in from anywhere in Wisconsin, Illinois or Michigan). Someone my father knew had an extra Sunfish rig — with more freeboard, and the rudder not fitting, so bailing wire did the trick.

I loved that boat. It was really close to the water, surfboard-like, even more than a Sunfish, and I enjoyed having my younger brother on board (total crew weight probably less than 150 pounds). We traded that boat in for my first brand spanking new Sunfish, in maybe 1966. No newfangled storage compartment and equipped with the old Rube Goldberg brass kick up rudder hardware — guaranteed to pop up and render you out of control on a screaming reach or screwed down so tight it would never pop up. If you forgot to loosen it, when you hit the beach, it bent up the contraption and/or pulled the screws out of the deck.

We soon traded that first boat in on two boats with the newer equipment (one for me and one for my brother — my father had us mowing lawns and shoveling sidewalks to pay for half).

I raced the Sunfish, as a junior, on Lake Michigan in the 1960s and 70s. It was the junior boat on the Southern end of the lake. Literally, every North Shore suburb of Chicago had a junior and senior Fleet. I progressed as a serious racer and won the Midwest Junior championships in 1972, back when it used to draw 80 boats. The year before, I raced the North Americans at Sayville, New York, (definitely not distinguishing myself but having a great time).

My teacher at our 20-boat, three day-a-week “junior fleet” at Winnetka Yacht Club was a young college student named Major Hall, assisted by his brother, Slater. Maj would go on to win the Sunfish North American championships and to be my high school English teacher before taking the reins at Yacht Racing magazine and coaching the Olympic board sailing team.

It was a pretty low key learning environment with lots of racing and not too many drills. Even so, it turned out some pretty top-notch sailors. Scott Kyle and Malcolm Dickinson both grew up in the club. Bob Finley two towns farther south.

On rainy days we would learn more intensely at the chalkboard. And it was great growing up in that era: two miles away on a bicycle, with my boat ready to go any time on a rack at the beach. Sunfish are self-rescue and, as long as I was wearing a life preserver, my parents allowed me to go out no matter how rough the weather was. That level of independence is a far cry from how kids are growing up sailing today in highly regimented, coached environments being chauffeured around with helicopter parents constantly hovering — and with lots of pressure to excel. Sometimes, I’m afraid, at the expense of fun.
When it was time for a junior or senior regatta, some high school or college student with a driver’s license would throw my boat on top of their car, or on top of their boat on a trailer with some inner tubes in between, and we were off.

Before I had my own Sunfish, I’d grown up crewing on the family Thistle and frostbiting in a Penguin in the hottest fleet in the country. The Skokie Lagoons Penguin Fleet drew the top sailors from every class in the region (including Lightning and Star world champions, Olympic medalists, and more).

On summer weekends I raced in one of the more competitive Sunfish fleets in the nation, with 25 boats commonly the line, including Don and Jean Bergman, Larry Lewis and a host of other wonderful adults who were incredibly generous, kind and compassionate to a young kid who was really interested in getting better.

My junior record in the Sunfish was strong enough to garner an invite to the first US Sailing Youth Championships and I acquired my first Laser in 1974 to compete in the event, along with my first Thistle.

In 1975, at the height of the class’ prominence, I was the runner-up, and top North American, at the Penguin International Championships, as well as the season champ at the Skokie Lagoons (after being runner-up three times, I won the Worlds in 1990). I had won senior Sunfish regattas, beating my mentor Don Bergman (although he beat me more than I ever beat him), but my dominance in the Penguin would earn me recognition I hadn’t previously had.

I started getting invitations to steer hot custom boats in the strong Chicago IOR fleet. After being thoroughly bored with that, I acquired a used Star and campaigned that for a number of years, again racing against multiple world and Olympic champions in the local fleet (including Buddy Melgis and the reigning North American champion, Peter Wright).

I learned a lot from every one of these classes and their widely respected talent. The Star rig is so flexible, and the rake of the mast and the camber of the sail so readily adjustable, that you become, in essence, the sailmaker on the water.

I viscerally hated the Laser until they came out with the new multi-purchase rigging enabling me to shift gears and excel in shifty conditions, which has always been my forte. My 5’8”, 165 pound stature suddenly became more competitive in the class as deep powering became an option.

It wasn’t until this past season, sailing the Sunfish again, that I really recognized how challenging the boat still was, engaging in a more intimate way with the water. It’s a more sophisticated boat now. I find it now much more challenging than the Laser — which feels, in comparison to the Sunfish, like a “paint by numbers” formula of tuning for speed.

There is an old saying about racing a number of small boat classes, and the Sunfish certainly qualifies: “It might be the world’s easiest boat to sail — but the most difficult boat to sail well.”

2017 — The Year Laser Performance Almost Ended My Sailing Fantasy

Losing most of our Laser regattas in the Upper Midwest and with some having no more than 4-6 boats, it was time to get serious about buying a Sunfish. I figured I could race a couple times a year at Lake Bluff and Highland Park, north of Chicago on Lake Michigan, in addition to the remaining Laser events.

So with the advice and counsel of Rich Chapman, class president and longtime friend, I went on the hunt. I located a handful of boats that had been lightly used for recreation and seemed to be really good prospects. But after calling, literally, 20 dealers, I couldn’t find a racing sail or modern dagger board. I was open to buying a brand-new boat but couldn’t find one within a thousand miles of my home, either.

I was just about to give up when I discovered the rare exception of a dealer, The Dinghy Shop in New York, that had what I needed. I then purchased a 1984 boat in really nice shape. It leaks, just like all my boats did in the old days, and it’s not very fair .... but it’s a Sunfish and she looks pretty! I have great affection for her. And she carries the sentimental sail number I raced with years ago: 7500.
After picking up the boat in Illinois on a Saturday in early June, I stopped in Lake Bluff, a competitive fleet that gets as many as 20 competent sailors on the line, and borrowed one of Rich’s boats and hit the water. Humiliating. In my first light air and lumpy race, I finished 11th out of 12 boats. I had been cocky. I thought I knew how to race a Sunfish. And assumed the other boats I had raced had taught me a lot. I figured I would’ve come out of the blocks towards the top of the fleet. Reality was a generous serving of humble pie!

In the next race, I finished fourth. Still pretty far off the pace behind Rich and the other top sailors in the fleet, but it left me eager to relearn both what I had forgotten and the new techniques based on the better equipment we are now using. I borrowed Rich’s Sunfish Bible and headed home to study.

My first regatta was the following weekend – the Michigan Championships at Gull Lake. I wouldn’t have been able to sail, nor been competitive, if it wasn’t for the help of longtime class stalwart Gale Turluck, who assisted me with tuning and lent me a racing sail and dagger board (mine were still in transit).

Competing against 14 boats from four Midwest states, I won the event by 10 points — more by seat-of-the-pants, inland lake sailing, than any kind of prowess in terms of knowing the Sunfish. I had by then remembered some of my lessons from Maj Hall (like constantly adjusting the sail, and I do mean constantly). I combined that with changing the heel in the boat, and thus the hydrodynamic efficiency of the foils, and shifting from pointing to footing mode depending on feeling whether I had lift from the daggerboard. Along with Gail, a highly competent and competitive sailor from Lake Erie, Josh Kerst, was incredibly generous in sharing advice, on and off the water, getting me up to speed.

I spent the next weeks fiddling around with installing inspection ports, a custom mount for my compass, ratchet blocks and cleats, installing the sail and all the accoutrements on the spars, and I was ready to go! This was really a lot of fun. I felt like a kid again. I had been suffering from a lot of stress and burnout from work and this was the perfect medicine. A big thank you to class asset, Jim Koehler, and his daughter Marguerite. I think they were lucky to break even, throwing in lots of advice with every part I purchased.

“There is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats,” Kenneth Grahame

The Midlife Crisis and Enduring Addiction

Well, I was hooked. While my Lasers were collecting dust, my goal now was to figure out how to race the Sunfish and I was determined to sail it every time I got the chance last season. My travel log, continuing below, will illustrate the madness. I had done well at Gull Lake, winning two of the races, and the event by 10 points, but my performance was erratic. Sailing next to Bob Finley, a former North American champion who won two or three of the races, left me knowing that at times my boat speed left a lot of room for improvement.

Next, I had an invitation in my role as an organic industry watchdog with The Cornucopia Institute to do an investigative visit to a large poultry farm producer and processor in Pennsylvania. Fly? Take the train? No way! I drove from Wisconsin to Pennsylvania, stopping at a small regatta at Berlin Yacht Club (Ohio) on the way and the following weekend racing with the Greater Detroit’s Sunfish Club (GDSC) at their annual regatta on Tawas Bay on Lake Huron.

GDSC has a unique culture built around selecting where they race, camp and share meals together. What a great group! It’s like an extended family that I was invited to join for the weekend. Pretty sweet.

It was my first opportunity to cross paths with former world champion and class icon, Derek Fries (just as I was finishing reading his book). I won the regatta because Derek was only able to sail the second day of the event. I led him around the first triangle in a couple of the races, but my mistakes, along with his seemingly flawless sailing, better boat speed on port tack and off the wind, left me behind but grateful for the learning opportunity. When he was ahead at the weather mark, I was usually just one or two boat lengths behind. Close enough that I could carefully observe his movements in the boat and trim.
Then it was back to Wisconsin for the Carpenter Lake regatta. What a delightful event! Hosted in the Northwoods at a beautiful lakefront camp owned by competitor David Hanselman. They put a number of us up in their cottages. A real vacation along with the racing. With beautiful sun, and a breeze in the mid-teens, I was in my shifty element with a long time class veteran Leland Brode, from Illinois, applying constant pressure.

Proving the Midwest district is ... big (!), I next headed west to the Lincoln Sailing Club, in Nebraska for a beautiful midsummer regatta. Here’s one that I would encourage attending. It’s a new, growing and evolving fleet. Lesson learned: if you are racing an older boat, go over the equipment carefully. With only one pin holding the mast cap on, my rig crashed to the deck in the first race. Whenever I’m not challenged hard on the race course, it gives me a tremendous opportunity to talk to the other sailors on and off the water helping them get up to speed. I had a lot of fun and their club is excited about their second annual event this August. Please consider attending if you are even remotely within driving distance. We need to support the new and existing regattas. The class, as are many, is small and fragile at this point — use it or lose it.

Next, I would finally get to compete on Lake Michigan in the two regattas that I had originally purchased the boat to race in. First at Lake Bluff Yacht Club we had a three-way spirited dogfight between Rich Chapman, Scott Schappe and myself. We just missed the time limit in the last race, with Scott leading followed by me and then Rich. If we had made the time limit (Scott, you should have been sailing faster!). If we had finished that race within the time limit, in the existing order, painfully close to the finish line, I would’ve beaten my mentor, Rich, for the first time in a series. How’s that for close competition? [I finished third, proving why I never have been to Las Vegas.]

The next weekend, at Highland Park Yacht Club, I had a great time sailing against multi-time International Penguin champion Sandy Rapp, someone who was truly a hero when I was a teenager he being just a few years older (also a top Thistle sailor). I would’ve been first and Sandy would’ve been second had we not tied in winning the “doofus award.”

The race committee made it very clear that the start/finish line was closed on the second beat. Not only did the two of us ignore that once, we were disqualified in two races (one was mercifully a throw out). Leland Brode proved that following the rules, and leading at least one race wire-to-wire, can be good enough to win a regatta. I finished second this time. This was my first outing in a breeze, in the upper teens, and large waves. (I have now purchased seasick bands and once again know that I’m going to have a lot to learn when I’m in a big open water fleet.)

The craziness of my midlife crisis continued when I needed to attend, in early September, a training outside of Boston. Boston! Who in their right mind would drive from Southwest Wisconsin to Boston. Obviously, I would — if there are Sunfish regattas on the way there and on the way back.

On my trip out east, I made my first appearance at the Midwest District Sunfish Championship in Devils Lake, Michigan. Rich sailed beautifully, winning three of the six races. I won one and we both had all of our finishes in the top three (with the exception of throwing out fourth and fifth respectively). We were followed by Dan Norton and Josh Kerst, both winning races and sailing very solid series. [Pictured left to right: Rich, Mark, Dan, Josh and two local juniors who we will all probably know well in just a few years]

On my way back from Boston the next weekend, I stopped for a small regatta at Clark Lake Yacht Club back in Michigan. It was a very light air, multi-class affair. I was behind long time Snipe ace Jim Rich-ter many times throughout the regatta but ended up winning with Jim second.

I’ve lost track of the calendar, but I also raced an event in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the Les Cheneaux Yacht Club invitational. Once again, Derek was there for this one-day event. Unlike the first time we matched up, I never led him at a mark. I was right on his tail, in a much better breeze, and again had a wonderful learning opportunity. He’s a great sportsman. And, as I used to say when I raced the Star, one of the top classes in the world, “this was like playing golf with Arnold Palmer!” How many other sports are like sailing?
You would think, at this point, I would be tired from both the racing and driving but I had one more chance, in early November, to race the boat I had a growing affection for at the famous Johnson Slough Oktoberfest event. This is a misshapen body of water that reminded me of my old Penguin frostbite venue, the Skokie Lagoons. We had an old saying on the lagoons: first will be last and last will be first. There were a lot of holes and opportunities to make or lose lots of money out on the race course. It was a lot of fun and really tested your mantle. An intrepid dozen or so sailors raced in a cold November rain with a wonderful party, hot shower and warm food following. Going into the last race, Rich calculated a three-way tie between himself, fellow Lake Bluff top competitor Scott Schappe and myself. I finished third behind those two ... again.

Well, that’s 11 regattas if I count correctly. And I’d been hoping to race the Sunfish just two or three times. It’s healthier than most addictions, but it’s an addiction all the same. I found the boat to be way, way more challenging than I had expected. The new racing equipment and the asymmetrical rig make this a tricky boat. But a fun ride while you are learning!

It’s the intellectual and physical challenge that I find so rewarding in yacht racing. And the Sunfish is certainly special — the great equalizer. I raced two Laser regattas last year, in addition to our weekly Tuesday evening racing locally. I can still finish in the top three at a Laser event, but I am not competitive out in waves on open water. I’m an earnest reader of this publication and it is so heartening to see women, juniors and 63-year-old men like me, all competitive. There are few other classes like that. We are truly lucky.

As I write this, it’s March 2018 and the saga (craziness) continues. I just tried to buy a second boat to leave on the beach at our local lake (a dammed up section of the Mississippi River). I know I need to practice sailing in a heavy breeze, and waves, if I’m ever going to compete with the quality of sailors this class has in large events. The photo of the boat on Facebook looked great (well used with an older racing sail and dagger board). The people selling it had been gifted the boat by their parents and really didn’t know anything about Sunfish. I don’t know where they got the photo they used. But when I got there the boat was from the early 1960s and must’ve weighed 200 pounds. So, I’m still on the hunt for a training boat.

It’s really unfortunate, and highly detrimental to the class, that the manufacturer is so dysfunctional and adversarial in their relationship with our volunteer class leadership. I know there are lots of good folks working on remediating this problem and I hope they are successful because it almost prevented me from having this summer of fun (and it will presumably prevent others from joining us on the water).

The bottom line to this story is the incredible appreciation I have for all the people who helped me fulfill my dream of getting back in the boat and sailing competitively (at least here in the Midwest). The quality of competition, coupled with an unparalleled friendly environment, made this summer a lot of fun. I want to thank everyone who helped me along the way and I will do my very best to return your generosity, by paying it forward, when I cross paths with folks working to improve their skills as well.

**In the Hurricane’s Eye** by Nat Philbrick, 1978 Sunfish North American Champion

The Sunfish family has lots to brag about ... champion sailors and many wonderful people who have accomplishments above and beyond sailing. Nat Philbrick is one of those whose written words capture you and take you back to the middle of the battles or wherever the action is happening. You learn about a history we were never taught in school. So share his books with your kids and grandkids too!

To quote what was said in Nat’s online Newsletter: *Here is the story of the remarkable year leading up to the siege of Yorktown. It sets Washington against his traitorous nemesis Benedict Arnold and places him in impossible situations and constant acrimonious negotiation with his French allies, along with his young protégé, the Marquis de Lafayette and his energetic general Nathanael Greene. In a narrative that moves from the ship-crowded waters off Newport, Rhode Island, to a wooded hillside near North Carolina’s Guilford Courthouse, to the Dutch storehouses on the Caribbean island of St. Eustatius, Philbrick narrates the pivotal naval battle that brought the end of America’s long, elusive path to independence. It was an improbable triumph made possible by Washington’s brilliant strategy, leadership, and revolutionary use of sea power.*

[https://www.nathanielphilbrick.com/](https://www.nathanielphilbrick.com/)