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N2E 71: Where family, favorites, good ole' boats and newcomers come together

ENSENADA, Mexico, April 30, 2018 – Although trophies won in the annual Newport to Ensenada International Yacht Race honor those who have bested their competitors by hours, minutes and seconds, it was the difference of years that garnered the most cheers at the 71st awards ceremonies Sunday.

For the second time in three years 91-year-old skipper Richard McNish was on stage collecting the City of Ensenada Trophy for Best Corrected Time, PHRF G, and the New York Yacht Club Trophy for Best Elapsed Time, Single Hull/Divided Rig. McNish has sailed *Cheerio II*, a 46-foot, 1931 yawl, in N2E for almost 20 years. Each year before the race, the certified State Historical Vessel is hauled out and checked over to make sure nothing is going to break.

McNish said they got a good start and were making great time until 2:30 am. Then the wind shut off, he said. Prior to that time, the YB Tracker was predicted an awards sweep for the boat. But it took a while to build to 2 knots, before finally catching a bigger breeze and *Cheerio* was happy again, McNish said.

For years, only “men of a certain age”, AKA over 50, crewed on *Cheerio II*. Recently though, McNish started taking on a couple of younger, yet experienced sailors as crew members. The collaborative group has worked really well, he said.

Conversely, the minimum age requirement to crew on Joe Markee and Bill Hardesty's *Ohana*, is three. It was only the second time the classic 1982 Swede 55 sailed in N2E and the first with Hardesty's son.

Hardesty, a 2014 Rolex ISAF World Sailor of the Year nominee and a 12-time world champion, turned a family cruiser into an award-winning long distance racer on their second try; taking home the coveted President of USA Trophy for Best Corrected - All PHRF and the Gil Knudson trophy for Best Corrected - PHRF D.

The seven-person crew, six of whom took turns at the helm, and for the most part got involved in each position, sailed the boat to an overall corrected time behind only *Mighty Merloe* and *Orion*, the 60 and 70 foot trimarans that finished Friday before dark.

Aboard *Ohana* (which means family in Hawaiian), Friday evening the crew of Mom, Dad, Grandpa, and a couple of friends, watched the sunset and enjoyed a family-style dinner of pasta and a glass of wine. Cruisers, yes, but they take sailing seriously.

The weather was good to us, said Hardesty. Although they coasted for the last half-mile, it was about half way down the course when it appeared they were doing well. We were around some faster boats that we're not used to sailing with, he said. Early weather predictions indicated better

wind offshore, so we stuck with the plan, said navigator Frank Tybor. They did not fly the kite early, or moved inshore too early, wary of getting stuck. Although Hardesty reports the boat does not have a large or fancy sail inventory, which reduces the discussion about which one to use, said Markee. They flew the code zero for seven to eight hours, the spinnaker at night, and after 3 am when the wind became fleeting, went through everything they had and finished with a jib.

Although being sturdy, heavy; outfitted to go cruising and does not like to turn, the crew nurtured *Ohana's* sweet spot. The boat's got a narrow 9'7" beam; heels over quickly, and likes reaching, said Hardesty. The conditions were perfect for us, and it all came together. After crossing the finish line at 6 am, the crew's phones started to buzz as texts from friends who were following the YB Tracking reached out to congratulate them.

For a while, it seemed that everything was falling apart for *Some Tuesday*, Steve Dunlap's 2017 Lagoon 450-S on its inaugural N2E. First, they got yelled at while trying to find the check-in boat. Four hours into the race, a drone that had been capturing some beautiful footage of the boat at sea with its spinnaker flying, started struggling to keep up with *Some Tuesday*, now cruising at 9 knots. Since slowing down was not an option the entire crew watched as radio contact was lost and the drone plunged into the ocean. Minutes after that, the nice new spinnaker ripped. Later, about 24 miles off Rosarito, the nut holding the gooseneck pin came off and with it, the boom fell, boom. At least that they could fix.

Of Dunlap's seven-man crew, three had never even sailed before he bought the boat and for others this was their first race. However, boat and crew made numerous practice sails and Dunlap taught everyone – including his father-in-law Stephen Estee who flew in from Springfield, Mass., for the race - how to man each of the sailing positions.

The training, and perseverance, paid off. Despite the obstacles and coming in 16 minutes behind the competition in ORCA B, they corrected 21 minutes faster; winning the class.

After all this, might Dunlap and crew return for a second N2E? Absolutely, 100 percent yes, the entire team said, without hesitation. Next year, the goal is to win without the handicap. They won't bring a drone, and are pretty confident having a spinnaker will help too.

Friends and Family: The Heart of N2E

Jim Bailey's *Destroyer*, a TP52, finished second in the Maxi Class on its first N2E edging out last year's big winner, *Pyewacket* by a mere 45 seconds. Bailey, who sailed with his three sons, said for a while, the two boats went back and forth ahead of one then the other, in an apparent drift-off. *Pyewacket* finishing only one minute and 30 seconds ahead of them, but corrected out ahead – thanks to a one point difference in handicaps

Gregory Dorn's *Lady Jane*, one of two boats sailing for St. Francis Yacht Club returned with Dorn's 18-year old son Nick and his friend Charlie Wooler, sailing their first N2E. The Jenneau 391 placed third in the Cruz-Gen class,

N2E's old friend *Medicine Man*, Bob Lane's Andrew's 63, returned to the podium after a couple years' hiatus to claim best corrected MAXI. The crew reported that they found an outstanding breeze, all the way to the finish. It was one jibe and straight to the bar.

Another multiple-time N2E winner *Horizon* topped PHRF B once again. Nope, winning doesn't get old, said Len Bose, skipper of the Santa Cruz 50. "Each race offers new stories, new things to reflect upon," he said "It's good to see the expressions on the faces of people who have not been there (on stage) before, I wish more people could see that."

But **Fast Exit**, relative new comer on its second N2E, was making a run for *Horizon* and came up only 4 minutes and 30 seconds astern.

Merry Cheers, who has been sailing since 1998, raced with John Raymont on his modified Andrews 40. She was at the helm at during the moonlit sail, and got boat over 15. knots. "I just sail the numbers— one and in!" Cheers smiled. During the course of the race, she said the crew shared stories about Scott Poe, who was supposed to be sailing with them. Less than a month after returning the boat from previous race to Mexico, there have been many unhappy reports that Poe has fallen seriously ill. "We knew that he was there in spirit, we felt him aboard," she said. Of the Go Fund Me posts circulating and being shared to offset expenses, Cheers says "Sailing is more than a community, it's a family."

NOSA's family, Bill Gibbs, who served this year as Vice Commodore of Race, tried to fly under the radar, but still managed to score another four trophies for *Wahoo's*, his Schionning GF 1400 time of 15:16:43 in ORCA-A. The win has more than secured Gibbs as one of the most winningest skippers in N2E's history.

Mighty Merloe, the ORMA 60, may not have claimed the record this year, but as a consolation prize, they took home four trophies: Best Elapsed Overall, Best Corrected Overall, Best Elapsed and Corrected Orca-Maxi Class.

"It was really exciting to have the MOD 70 Orion come down from San Francisco to race against us. They are a great crew, and we had to push very hard to beat them." said tactician will Suto. "I'd like to say thanks to Enloe, the owner of Mighty Merloe, for putting together such a fast boat and talented crew. It's a special thing to have boats like this racing. We hope to see more of it in Southern California in the future."

Trophy winners below; full results available at <https://scoring.nosa.org/results/N2E>

Results for Dana Point and San Diego Courses also at nosa.org

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