

ANOTHER GREAT NORTH AMERICAN INVITATIONAL

Last weekend San Diego Cruiser Association showed their best colors in hosting a flawless NAI. This year's event was hosted by San Diego Yacht Club in their beautiful clubhouse located on Shelter Island Bay. Everything was great. The weather was perfect. It threatened to rain on the contest but held off until later Saturday night while we were all indoors for the awards dinner and ceremony. Conditions on the water for Thursday's time trials and the Saturday race were mild. So with wonderful warm weather, beautiful surroundings, and the friendly atmosphere of the folks of the San Diego Cruiser Association and Yacht Club, a very good time was assured.

The traditional schedule began with a get-acquainted cocktail party and drawing for contestant boats on Wednesday evening. One of the things I particularly like about San Diego is their excellent measured mile. Situated off of Harbor Island, it is well marked and in protected water outside of the traffic channel. Thursday morning we got some good numbers that all seemed to fit together nicely on our speed curve, although our boat owner was surprised that they were three tenths knot lower than he expected. All we could do was to stick with the data we generated from the mile runs.

That afternoon was the NACA General Meeting and the Skipper's Meeting. The NACA meeting was longer than usual taking up the entire hour allotted. It included a lively discussion on ideas and methods for developing new log racers. Perhaps you've noticed some of the ads NACA is running to try to encourage new racers; there are plans to expand that effort. Following the NACA meeting the Skipper's meeting went very smoothly. More than likely due to the excellent preparation and presentation of the course and the waypoint photos and descriptions both in the booklet issued and on the SDCA website, <http://sandiegoca.org> by Racemaster David Weimer. That evening we all enjoyed a poolside barbeque at SDYC.

Friday was a "free day". For those of us predicting the contest, it was anything but free. We had over forty elemental legs in our predictions and it took us the entire day to complete the predictions. The course was well written, challenging us to determine the currents (in both deep water channels and shallows) and to call some interesting visual ranges, both inside and outside the Bay. I awoke at 3 a.m. Saturday morning and remembered that I had forgotten to activate the turn time prediction function before printing out the predicted times and entering them on the official log.

Needless to say, I was rather busy that morning preparing a new log to submit. Fortunately I did remember that error in time to rectify it!

Saturday was the day of the contest and for us it was different than usual. Instead of starting at 0'dark-thirty, our predicted start was 9:52. I suspect the Committee wanted to place us on the course during the times of "more interesting" tidal currents. Anyway we actually had time to enjoy a leisurely breakfast at SDYC before the race. We started at a buoy just outside Shelter Island and proceeded far into the Back Bay on a flood tide. Although I've had a lot of experience ripple reading currents off of buoys, I'm still not very good at it when it comes to judging small differences in velocity. So for the most part we stuck to the values we had figured into our log based on the predictions for the San Diego Channel Entrance.

We had the usual challenges of trying to maintain course and predictions while yielding right-of-way in a number of situations. Fortunately we didn't encounter any Navy warships that would have required we divert well off of course or do a stop to comply with the new regulations. Once out of the Bay and into the ocean, the course consisted of six legs in roughly the shape of a star, probably so we could experience the ocean current in every direction. On our first leg out to the San Diego entrance buoy we carefully checked our drift to determine any current moving up or down coast. Although we had expected and predicted an up-coast current, we found none, which was confirmed by checking drift on the second ocean leg. On the next leg we had predicted a half-knot of hurt and, based on our observations, we pulled back 140 RPM to correct for the missing current. While on the long third ocean leg run down toward the Antenna Array, we again checked our drift and determined there was none on that leg either. On the last three legs outside the Bay we continued to correct out the current built into our predictions that wasn't there. However once into the entrance channel, we didn't see the ebb current we were expecting and pulled back some RPM. That was a mistake, as the results would later show. As mentioned, I'm not very good at judging the exact value of the current on a buoy.

Saturday evening's activities were held in the main dining room of the San Diego Y.C. Following remarks by NACA Commodore Chuck Rubin, the 2009 NACA Bridge, including new Sec./Treas. Jeff Calabrese, was installed. Jeff was also the Chairman of the NAI and presided over activities for the evening.

I was delighted to have the honor of presenting the Gandelman Hall of Champions Trophy to Bob Ehlers. It is awarded to the member who, over a period of time, has made a significant contribution to the sport of log racing. Bob has certainly done that considering his long efforts for the SDCA. With NACA he is not only a Past Commodore but also continues to serve to this day as the NACA Executive Secretary. Congratulations Bob!

The “peel off” was very interesting and was done a little differently than we’ve seen before. It’s a bit difficult to describe, but basically the presentation board consists of a horizontal line for each contestant. The board is graduated in reverse with zero at the right and 4+ percent at the left. Initially all racers pointers are positioned to the right of the board at zero. As each score for each leg is announced, the individual pointer is moved to the left to indicate the error. Whereas each pointer is always positioned at the then cumulative error for that racer, the result is a dynamic motion of the pointers as they move left or right depending on the weighting and score of the most recent leg. It is an interesting presentation and it kept us in suspense until close to the end.

Once the results were revealed, congratulations were in order for Ed Denaci of SDCA for winning with a 0.557 on board the vessel Just Deserts. The rest of the scores and some photos are available on the NACA website: <http://predictedlog.org/NAI/NAI%20Results/2008%20NAI/2008%20NAI%20Results.htm>

From my point of view, San Diego did a superb job in pulling off a perfect NAI. My personal thanks go to Chairman Jeff Calabrese and all of the fine team he had supporting the event. I believe I speak for all of the contestants when I say that we had a terrific time. Thanks again!