



The forecast was dismal for racing, but the PRO Hank Stuart and the Race Committee at the Rochester Yacht Club showed great patience. The fleet went out in a light breeze and were held in postponement for about an hour. The expected Northeasterly filled in a little earlier than predicted and the fleet began racing in 6-8 knots which increased to about 10 in the third race of the day. Leaders Todd Wake from Sheboygan YC in Wisconsin and his team of wife Kristine and Neal Fowler continued to dominate the 34 boat Championship Fleet and posted a 2, 2, 6 to win the 2016 Samson Lightning North American Championship with just 16 points.

"Kristine, Neal and I have sailed together for the past 5 years. We have spent a lot of time tweaking the boat set up and tuning techniques. The moderate conditions during the championship series fell right into our performance sweet spot. Our starts were fairly good, but more importantly we had the ability to hold tight lanes off the line. This allowed us to have a little more choice in terms of which direction to go in the sometimes unpredictable conditions. Once we were in the open, our speed really worked for us, and we concentrated on sailing fast toward pressure. After years of being close, it felt great to win this year's North American Championship, and nothing beats being able to share it with my wife, family, and all our friends in the Lightning class." Todd Wake.

Ched Proctor from Cedar Point YC in West Port, CT sailing with his son Charlie and Meredith Killion posted 4, 4 in the final two races to finish in second. Justin Coplan from Camp Hill, Pennsylvania sailing with Danielle Prior and Bill Wiggins won the last race to finish in third. Rochester locals Mark Sertl sailing with wife Cory and Christine Moloney won the battle for fourth over son Nicholas Sertl. Nicholas and his crew of Dylan Farrell and Haley McMahon were also the top Junior Team and finished in fifth.

Other Rochester locals, John Newell, Owen MacDonald and Ava Esquier won the final race of the President's Cup Division to win the title with 13 points. There was a three way tie for 2nd. Alejandro Perez from Chile sailing with Rodrigo Robles and Jose Lopez won the tie breaker by winning Races 1 and 2. Jonathan Martinetti from Salinas, Ecuador sailing with Francisco Almeida and Juan Rafael Santos finished in third by winning Race 4. Michael Zonnenberg from St Petersburg, FL sailed consistent with his drop race being a 6th place. Zonnenberg was joined by Adam Ceely and Michael Booker. Debbie Probst from the Buffalo YC sailing with Jennifer Millar and Karl Felger won Race 5 and finished in fifth place.

2016 Junior North American Champions, Doug Wake (Sheboygan, WI) and Meredith Ryan sailing with Katie Braungart continued to dominate the Governor's Cup. The Team won 3 races and sailed really consistent dropping a 6 and won the division with just 8 total points. Skylar Mungar from Oswego, NY sailing with Roy Ingham and Ted Chilek finished in second with 13 points. Class President, Victor Lobos from Chile sailing with brother Sebastian and Gram Slaterry won the final race to win the tie breaker for third place over Stu Nickerson from Maine sailing with Kip Hamblet and Elizabeth Elliott Whitener. Rochester local, Daniel Lawless, Peter Steo and Jenny Rosenbauer rounded out the top 5 with 28 points.

The 2016 Samson North American Championships showed some impressive statistics. 32 boats or 43% of the Fleet were sailing with 2 or more family members. Of this 11 teams were sailing with spouses and 4 were all family boats. 19 boats or 26% of the Fleet were helmed by skippers under the age of 30. Of that 13 Teams contained all crew members all under the age of 30. The fleet had 6 helmswomen and 15 first time competitors to a Lightning North American Championship. The future looks bright in the Lightning Class!

Day 4 - August 18 - Championship Racing

Championship racing kicked off today for the 2016 Samson Lightning North American Championship and there was WIND in Rochester! After some light air days on the water for the qualifying series, crews were all three on the rail today in a nice 10 knot breeze from the Northwest at 330. With the breeze from the Northwest this caused chop across the course. With the competitive fleets, lane management was key over the three races sailed.

Ched Proctor from Cedar Point YC sailing with his son Charlie and Meredith Killion took the first bullet of the day. The local team of Mark Sertl, his wife Cory and Christine Moloney won the second race. Qualifying winners from Chile Tito Gonzalez, his daughter Trinidad and son Alberto Jr. won the third race of the day. But it was the consistency of Todd Wake from Sheboygan and his team of wife Kristine and Neal Fowler. They sit in the lead tonight with 13.5 total points. Team Sertl is tied for second with Team Proctor.

Chileans Alejandro Perez, Rodrigo Robles and Jose Lopez showed impressive downwind speed to win the first two races in the President's Cup Division. The Ecuadorian Team of Jonathan Martinetti, Francisco Almeida and Juan Rafael Santos is tied with Team Perez for first with 8 total points. Rochester local, John Newell sailing with Owen MacDonald and Ava Esquier won the third race of the day and sit 1 point behind Perez and Martinetti.

Junior North American Champion, Doug Wake from Sheboygan, WI sailing with Meredith Ryan and Katie Braungart won the first two races of the Governor's Cup Division and are leading with 5 points. Local Philip Lange sailing with daughter Alexandra Lange and Allister Thompson posted a 2, 6, 5 and sit in second with 13 points. Stu Nickerson from Maine sailing with Kip Hamblet and Elizabeth Elliott Whitener are tied for third with Gerry Paoli from Carlyle, IL sailing with Bryan Burke and Ian Moriarty.

Racing concludes Friday, August 19th. The Fleet is hoping for another perfect sailing day with 3 anticipated races.

Day 3 - August 17 - Slate wiped clean - will it be another Starck - Gonzalez showdown?

Qualifying racing concluded today at the 2016 Samson Lightning North American Championship and for the second time in a row, Chilean Tito Gonzalez won the Qualifying Series! Sailing with his daughter Trinidad and son Alberto, Jr. the Team posted three bullets. When asked how the team dynamics work on the boat, Alberto Jr. said, "We all have our jobs and we do them, and we help each other. We train a lot together. We have good communication and don't blame one another if there is a bad call."

Canadian, Adam MacDonald, 2012 Lightning Youth World Champion posted won two of his three races to qualify in second. "It was fun sailing, with tough competition, but we all start over tomorrow. It's all about the next two days" said MacDonald. Sailing with Abby Bennett and Allie Jones, Team MacDonald is one of 10 teams that are all under 30 competing in the regatta.

Defending North American Champion, Jody Starck from Amherst, NY sailing with longtime crew Ian Jones and Rob Crane posted a 6, 2, 2 to qualify in third place. Starck commented, "the Race Committee did a great job of being patient in the tough conditions." Teams Starck and Gonzalez were 1-2 at the 2015 North American Championship. Both Teams are again sailing well. Will it be another showdown between the two or will one of the other 32 teams comprising of World Champions Matt Fisher, Larry MacDonald, David Starck and North American Champions, Tom Allen, Steve Hayden, Ched Proctor, Allan Terhune, Jr. Adam MacDonald or locals, James Barnash, Richard Hallagan, Mark Sertl or Nick Sertl?

While discussing the fleet splits, the Fleet celebrated the 10th Anniversary of our prestigious Boat Grant Program this evening. Evening festivities included Quantum Sails Rochester Rum Party, Saranac Beer tasting, Karaoke and fantastic door prizes from APS, Coral Reef Sailing Apparel, Sperry, Sailor Bags and Samson. A delicious cookout was provided by Rochester Yacht Club. Program creators Bill Fastiggi and Allan Terhune recapped the past 10 years that included 31 Teams and over 96 participants of which 9 have purchased their own boat. Boat Grant Alumni Robert King was the winner of the Tom Fallon Trophy that is awarded to the last person to qualify for the Championship Blue Fleet.

Racing for the Championship (Qualifying Finishes 1-34), President's Cup (35-55) and Governor's Cup (56-76) begins with a 1000 warning on Thursday, August 18th.

Day 2 - August 16

Qualifying racing kicked off at the Rochester Yacht Club, Rochester, NY for the 2016 Samson North American Championship on the second day. After a postponement ashore this morning, the 76 boat fleet headed out in 7-8 knots from the Southeast. RC set the mark at 125, 1.2 miles and called for course 4. Those on the right benefited from breeze filling in. Ched Proctor from Cedar Point Yacht Club in CT won the Blue Qualifying Fleet Race sailing with his son Charlie and Meredith Killion. The Gonzalez Family from Chile with Tito, daughter Trinidad and son Alberto, Jr. won the Green Qualifying Fleet race. Local James Barnash sailing with Geoff Becker and John Mastrandrea took the bullet in the Yellow Qualifying Race. Becker won the 2015 World Championship with Barnash as crew, this year their roles are reversed.

A second set of races were started. The breeze shifted left and died prompting the RC to shorten and shift the second windward mark. This proved to be the calm before the storm and PRO Hank Stewart abandoned races and the fleet was forced to sail in.

Teams Proctor, Barnash and Gonzalez are currently tied for first, pending protests.

Qualifying racing will continue into Wednesday. Once the Qualifying Series is concluded the Fleets will be split up into Championship, President's and Governor's Cup Divisions. Racing is scheduled through Friday.

Day 1 - August 15

No racing for the first day of the qualifying races for the 2016 Samson Lightning North American Championship. Chutes popped and filled for the way in but there was not enough wind for racing. Here's to better luck and more wind for competitors tomorrow.

