

Colorado Governor's Cup
Denver Sailing Association - Fleet 488
Cherry Creek Reservoir
September 17 - 18, 2011

Pos	Boat	Sail#	Club	HelmName	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total	Nett
1	Quest	15315	DSA	Bill Cabrall	(2.0)	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	6.0	4.0
2	Dandy Lion	12871	DSA & ILCA	Lucas Armstrong	(4.0)	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	14.0	10.0
3	Family Affair	14041	DSA	Jacob Vargish	3.0	(4.0)	2.0	2.0	3.0	14.0	10.0
4	Blue Two	15228	DSA	David Thompson	1.0	3.0	(4.0)	4.0 DNS	4.0	16.0	12.0

DAVID THOMPSON WINS HIS FIRST LIGHTNING RACE IN FANTASTIC COME FROM BEHIND FASHION!

HEARTS POUND AS HE CARRIES A CHUTE ABOVE CLOSE HAULED FOR OVER 1/4 MILE TO KNOCK OFF THE FLEET FROM BELOW THE LAYLINE IN A THRILLING DOWNWIND (?) TOUR DE FORCE!!

THOUSANDS CHEER AMAZING FINISH!!!

Well, actually, if you want the truth, only about 15 or 20 people cheered. After all, we were 1/2 mile off shore and everyone else in Denver was at the CU-CSU football game.

However, we were cheering, and pounding the deck, even though our chances of winning the Governor's Cup for the best overall finish went right out the window as Dave pulled off an amazing race in extremely challenging light air conditions. We just had to cheer, it was so incredible to watch.

Dave's race, race #1, started out as a light air windward/leeward in fluky weather. We started on a tight line, and dueled up the beat. My team read the shifts well, and led with a bearaway set at the weather mark, followed by Team Vargish (all 5 of them), and the Dandy Lions (this weekend they all had identical mustaches to go with their team shirts - now that's dedication!). Dave was fourth at the mark.

Down the run the wind went forward and we soon found ourselves hard pressed to carry the chute and stay up on the rumbline. A quiet conversation about dousing, and going back to the jib started up. Behind us Lucas Armstrong and the Dandy Lions, and Team Vargish in 'Family Affair' (what else could you call a boat with a 5 person team, 3 of which are under age 9, and one of which is about to be 4 years old) sagged off to leeward. Dave Thompson headed off a LOT! He was faster, gaining, but going very very low.

We didn't panic - after all, what goes down must come up, and we would be right there between him and the mark when it happened. We were on a very tight reach, closing in the mark, and had the wind 20 deg forward of a beam reach. There was no way he could carry the chute any higher than that.

When he doused we would too, and the race would be ours!

I thought!

Turns out I was wrong. Dave put his boat on the wind, kept the chute up, carried it close-hauled or better for 200 yards in 2 knts of breeze, and powered right thru the fleet from below without regard for the wind, the course, dirty air from the fleet, the Laws of Physics, or anything else rational.

He simply smoked us all, with superior sailing and his excellent team of twin teenage grandchildren (Kylie and Kai) pulling off a smoothly beautiful take-down/jybe around the leeward mark.

It goes without saying that he gave us no chance to recover on the final beat. Team Thompson and 'Blue Two' owned the lake. He hit the line, the gun went off, and we stood and cheered, pounding the deck to tell the world what Dave and his grandchildren had accomplished.

Round one to Blue Two!

2 closely fought drifters later, it became apparent that the clouds coming slowly off the mountains all day had finally decided where their victims were. As they took aim at the lake I could hear the RC discussing the situation over the VHF (more than enough reason to own one, by the way). By the time they decided to abandon and tow us in, we had the towline and paddle out and were ready to drop and roll the sails. The entire Lightning fleet was rafted up and ready before the RC boat could cross 40 yds to take our line.

Unfortunately, the rest of the dinghy fleet was not prepared or practiced at towing (we almost never do it in Colorado, and I have learned everything I know about it at large Lightning Regattas), and by the time everyone was ready it was too late to get in unscathed. The storm hit, and we got soaked! In the marina the scene was chaotic, as people were ill prepared to drop the tow and paddle 30 yds to a dock. The wind blew several boats back out of the marina where they needed to be rescued again.

I don't think I will ever take a tow without a paddle ready again, and we are talking about a fleet practice day next spring. Towing is an essential nautical skill. You may not need to know how to do it until it really matters, but once you do need a tow, you often REALLY need a tow!

So there were, cold, wet, and not a little battered, when the sky began to clear and the RC dropped the postponement flag. It was at this point that we all began to realize who the true star of the regatta really was. As 80 adults struggled to come to grips with getting back into very cold, wet boats and going out again, 3 year old Caroline Vargish (she turned 4 the next day), came running down the dock half out of an overlarge sou'wester yelling "Yeaaaaa! we're going sailing! we're going sailing! Yeaaaaa!!".

After that, there was only one thing to do - we went sailing again.

Now, if you think we were all shamed into going back out by a 3 year old, I have to tell you, ahhhh, yea, that's pretty much how it happened!

But this is no ordinary kid. Take a look at the attached photo from the next day, Caroline's 4th birthday, and you'll begin to see what I mean. This, Lightning land, is our future personified. This is the 2013 Woman's Rolex Yachtswomen of the year (I give her until she is 16!). She has beautiful blond hair and blue eyes, straight from a nordic nautical genetic background and a smile, that says she can already call laylines better than Ched Proctor (just wait until she's 5, and can spell the word too)!

Check out the the highly technical nautical attire - does your foul weather gear come with wings and a magic wand? Mine doesn't either. You can't quite see it in this shot, but everyone there will attest that she was racing in a skirt (don't all proper lightnng ladies do that?) also. Complete with a Dad that's a naval architect making a career out of restoring and re-engineering 6 meter yachts, and a mom that can work the foredeck, trim the jib, and orchestrate tactics for 3 small kids and a weather leg simultaneously, this young lady is the complete package, the real deal, the future of yachting in North America.

Sometime soon, you are going to be be coming into a weather mark all prepped for the perfect jybe set, only to hear a high, sweet, soft, clear 4 year old voice calling your name too - 'Hi Bill!' I'm hear to tell you, every parental bone in your body goes boink! when you hear a small child's voice offshore at a weather mark calling your name. There has got to be a rule about that somewhere ...

Out on the water for race 4, we found troubled conditions, and a mixed up race. Set up as a windward leeward once around, we had both upwind and downwind conditions - on all three legs! Half way through it began to become apparent that another line of storms was going to come through sometime that afternoon, sometime soon. We finished upwind on a broad reach, 3 Lightnings within a boatlength of each other surfing with chutes up (a fantastic, wonderful sight), then turned immediately around and sprinted for home.

We didn't quite make it. The second line of squalls came in, and the fleet had to fight it's way back to the club, the boats kicking and bucking (ride'm cowboy!) in the buffeting breeze. Thrashing into the marina I realized there had been no time to send someone forward to secure the bow line, and committed us to a painterless approach.

That was when we discovered all the women of Fleet 488 are nautical perfection. As we approached the dock Dave Thompson's granddaughter Kylie, already ashore, spotted our problem, grabbed her twin brother Kai, and came running back out into the rain and down the dock to grab our bow and make sure we docked safely. Aren't teenagers wonderful! Our docks are galvanized steel, and our bows are fiberglass gel coat, so you can be sure her mom heard all about how grateful I was!

Thank you very much, Kylie, I appreciate it!

By next morning, the front had blown through the sun had come out, and the fleet was treated to a warm, sunny, calm day. We spent 4 hours on the water, but only managed one light air race, most notable for a long discussion by the RC boats over the radio about the potential of abandoning. Luckily for me, they didn't, and I managed to drift through to a win based on the stellar performance of my excellent team, Raeyane Farrell and Jenii Bernet. With genius's like these two on board every maneuver was silky smooth, every shift was caught, the laylines were perfectly called, and the spinnaker flown to perfection.

I couldn't see the wings, but I think they buy their foul weather gear the same place Caroline does! They sailed my boat to a fantastic 2,1,1,1,1 series finish and the Lightning Fleet first place. Thank you very much Raeyane and Jenii!

At the trophy presentation, naturally, the entire Colorado sailing community sang happy birthday to Caroline.

And finally, no description of this regatta could be complete without singing the praises of Francine Hoffman, born and bred in New Jersey Lightning Country, Lightning Blue fleet participant in her own right, and this year the heart and soul behind everything Denver Sailing Association accomplishes. In addition to organizing the event, she spent both days on the water taking wonderful event photos.

Bill Cabrall
Lightning Fleet 488