

Saratoga Lake Sailing Club – Horse Race Regatta Clinic

Guest Instructor: Zack Clayton

Dear Members of Saratoga Lake Sailing Club MC Scow Fleet and Participants in the 2011 Horse Race Regatta:

It was an honor to be contacted first by friend and past customer Bob Wynkoop and then by Devon Howe to try to offer some of my past experiences to the MC fleet as well as the participants of the 2011 inaugural Horse Race Regatta.

Both Bob and Devon felt that there could be some advantages of having an afternoon warm-up session as well as chalk talk about the MC with someone who has a long time experience in the scow racing environment as well as the MC class. Luckily for me and probably misfortunate for you, the best they could come up with was myself.

A brief history for those of you that do not know about me, as I have been out of the regular MC class for just about four seasons now. First and foremost, I am a father and husband, thus no longer a sailmaker as those two things just don't particularly mix. Currently, I am still in the sailing industry working for DIMENSION-POLYANT, Inc., the largest cloth manufacturer in the world with production facilities in Putnam, CT, Kempen, Germany, Somersby, Australia and Colombo, Sri Lanka. My specific role at DP-USA is managing or D4® Multi Panel™ membrane sail manufacturing facility as well as handling the US market for the new DP Sri Lanka sail fabrication facility.

Before my time on the east coast, I grew up on a small scow dominated puddle of a lake in Southeastern Wisconsin, Lake Beulah. This body of water happens to be only about 35 minutes from the home of scow production, Zenda, WI. I learned to sail in the Midwestern youth trainer, the X-Boat, before the onset of Optimists. From there, I jumped into the C-Scow class, while being a sailing instructor for the youth racing fleets at several different lakes in Wisconsin. By the time I had had enough of the racing parents (the kids were great), Jim Gluek and Charlie Miller were looking for help in the old North loft facility in Pewaukee, WI, that had recently become an independent sail loft of Inland Sails. This was a great summer job that let me work on sails, learn sailmaking and help customers all while still getting to go race during the summer, then throw away the shears and yarn ripper and head back off to college when winter rolled around. That experience let me glean sailing knowledge from some top flight sailors as well as improve my sailing ability.

A two year hiatus, while I followed my dreams of working in intercollegiate athletics followed, but alas, home, a new fiancé and the allure of a full time sailmaking job came my way from Jim Gluek and the promise of a paycheck, rather than an intern at a low level Division I college peeled me away and back to the Midwest. Already trained as a sailmaker, my role expanded as the company grew and the need to cover all of the active scow fleets in the Midwest led to my full time sailmaking, sales and racing at many events in the MC and C-Scow class. As Jim was a past National Champion in the C-Scow, top flight E-Scow sailor and full time A-Scow navigator, they needed a fresh body in the MC class and I was the guy anointed with the boat, van and a pile of sails to get sold. Luckily for me, a transition from the C-Scow to the MC is not a large one and I was soon off and running. Now regatta championships do not grow on trees, especially for someone that came out of the youth regattas without ever winning an event. But with extra tiller time, good equipment and some tutoring (beat downs) from the top professionals like Andy Burdick, Eric Hood, John Dennis, Gordy Bowers and plenty more, I learned a ton and was able to move to the front of the fleet over a couple of year span. Today some of the younger guys have had much quicker emergence. People such as Jamie Kimball, Sam Rogers, Augie and Sally Barkow, all of which went through collegiate sailing, had the ability to jump right in and win out of the box. For more average

folks like you and me, it takes some extra time and effort, along with a little luck to find yourself at the top of a regatta results page.

So from 1999 thru 2007, I was lucky enough to learn the industry from pounding grommets to selling sails and handling the accounting of a small sailloft that transitioned from an independent three man show to a larger loft that teamed up with Quantum Sails to become the main competition to North Sails in the scow market. During that time, I was lucky enough to have some great success, along with my own level of disappointments at regional and national level regattas.

Some of the regatta highlights are below:

2000 MC-Scow Nationals – 3rd
2000 MC-Scow Blue Chip – 3rd
2001 MC-Scow Midwinter Championship – 2nd
2001 MC-Scow Blue Chip – 4th
2002 MC-Scow National Championship – 2nd
2003 MC-Scow ILYA Championship – 5th
2004 MC ILYA Championship – 1st
2004 C-Scow Wisconsin Yachting Association Championship – 1st
2004 C-Scow ILYA Invitational – 2nd
2004 MC-Scow National Championship – 4th
2004 Awarded Pillsbury Trophy – Top ILYA Championship regatta performance
2005 C-Scow Wisconsin Yachting Association Championship – 1st
2006 MC-Scow North Americans – 1st
2006 MC-Scow ILYA Championship – 4th
2006 C-Scow ILYA Invitational – 5th
2007 C-Scow Blue Chip – 2nd
2007 MC-Scow Midwinter Championship – 3rd
2007 MC-Scow National Championship – 2nd
2007 MC-Scow Southeast Regional – 1st
2010 C-Scow ILYA Championship – 10th

None of that really matters from a clinic point of view, the key is that we can discuss at the appropriate levels what we can do in a short period of time to get each and every one of you a nugget or two of knowledge that will increase your enjoyment of racing the MC. Whether it is beating your neighbor, sticking closer to the fleet or just feeling good coming out of a tack or gybe, that is the purpose here. I always told my youth students that I couldn't make any of the Inland Lake Yachting Association Champions, but if they worked hard and listened to what we were teaching that they could get into the top third at all events. This is the goal with this mini clinic; to improve the confidence, boatspeed and in turn individual results for your sailing level. If anyone has some specifics they would like covered, please forward to myself at: zack.clayton@dimension-polyant.com or just give me a call.

I look forward to meeting you all at the upcoming Horse Race Regatta this June.

Best regards,

Zack Clayton
DIMENSION-POLYANT, Inc.