

Winners Report for Sebago Sailing's first Laser Regatta 5/16/09

From Blake Marriner - Sebago Canoe Club Annual Regatta, 5/16/09, Brooklyn, NY -

I had the pleasure to meet "Team Sebago" (Holly, Tracy and Chris) last year at one of the Dinghy Shop regattas and listened to them describe their club and sailing area. I was really intrigued and made a mental note to make sure to attend if they hosted a Laser regatta there, so when I saw it on the D8 calendar this year, I was psyched. For some reason, visions of a childhood long past watching planes take off and land, the chance to race somewhere new and different (Jamaica Bay in Brooklyn no less!) and help them promote Laser sailing at their club was too good to pass up.

I'm here to tell you, do not miss sailing here if they host an event again! The location of the club and the racing area are very cool and the members of the club went out of their way to make us feel welcome. The fog made watching jet airliners a non-event, but perhaps that helped me concentrate on the racing, and there was plenty of that thanks to Jim and his RC team. (I will admit to watching the people riding horses on the beach though) Folks, we even had spectators out, cheering us on at the leeward mark, which gave the racing a bit of that NY Marathon feel to it.

We got in 8 races in about 3 hours of sailing, a mix of W/L (multiple laps) and a couple of T/W/L with nice long reaching legs. The conditions were really fun, a mix of everything – flat water, waves, current changes and breeze from about 8-14 kts, and oh yeah, the occasional fog bank. I thought the keys for me were:

Starts

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I felt whoever got off the line either in a controlling position or clear ahead, would be able to "ride herd" on the rest of the fleet up to the windward mark. I think the fall and spring frostbiting at Cedar Point in CT may give me a bit of an advantage in the early spring D8 events, as I'm coming off a full season of racing while others are just shaking the winter rust off, so I felt really good coming off the line – I made sure I was accelerating 5 seconds before the gun and at the favorite end of the line.

I also focused on boat handling, making sure turns were smooth which can help avoid losing a boatlength here and there.

Upwind, on the first beats I was most concerned with holding my lane, on the rest of the beats I was focused more on going fast thru the water which meant keeping the bow down. On the runs, when the breeze was up, there were waves that you could surf, so I spent a good bit of time sailing by the lee on stbd or turning up a bit to a reach to catch or stay on each wave. The long reaches also provided some surfing and planes, the key there was once you accelerated to make sure you moved back in the boat to pop the bow out and let the flat surface aft help keep you on plane – I saw a few bows that never really popped clear, which helped remind me and I'm sure helped me avoid getting passed.

As we de-rigged back on land, the aroma of burgers and dogs cooking on a charcoal grill wafted thru the air – are you kidding me, we’re getting fed too? A perfect ending to a great day, chowing down on some tasty grub before saying our good byes and hitting the road. I sure hope Sebago does this again next year, I can’t wait to go back, I still have to watch the jets. Seriously, I hope everyone makes the effort to come next time, and spreads the word, this really is a great place to spend time messing about in boats.