

Stella! and the kegerator

STELLA! and the Kegerator

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Rear Commodore

The day after Mardi Gras the SYC father and son team of Tim and Henry Molony, along with Florida based Hall of Fame multihull sailor Randy Smyth traveled to the Sarasota Sailing Squadron to sail the annual Sarasota Multihull Regatta. This is the de facto US championship for large multihulls. Boats from Texas, New York, the Midwest and up and down the East Coast were in attendance.



This would be the team's first chance to race their new Dragonfly 25 trimaran STELLA! against other racing multihulls from around the country. Imported from Denmark in October, STELLA! is 25 feet in length, 16 feet in width when sailing but only 7.5 feet when folded for docking or transport on a trailer. What makes her unique is her high tech, light weight construction and the ability to fold vertically so she can be kept in a regular marina slip. She's fast, beautiful, and loves a good breeze.

After an 11-hour, 700-mile drive with father and son sharing duties dodging tractor trailers and other cars we arrived unscathed at the Squadron, dropped the boat and headed for the lovely Sarasota "Holiday Inn Resort." Fortunately, it was only a three-day event.

The Sarasota Sailing Squadron is a member operated sailing club known for hosting sailing events year-round on Sarasota Bay. Blessed with almost perfect sailing conditions year-round the bay is a combination of ideal depth, clear water and easy access one needs to run regattas.

Meeting Randy the next day we rigged and launched the boat without any major incident and headed out to Sarasota Bay for a practice sail. The weather was perfect. This being our fourth year sailing this event, previously sailed in our 20-foot Corsair trimaran, Valerio,

you would think we would know the lay of the land and stay out of trouble. Staying true to form, however, as we have done every year, we managed to run aground on Sarasota Bay's channels' notorious sandbars. Coming from the rock bottomed Baltics, however, our trimaran builders anticipated our navigational talents and designed the boat with a kick up centerboard and rudder, so no harm done.

During the practice sail we got a chance to match up with what would be our chief competitor for the regatta, a very well sailed Corsair 28 from New York, Triumph. We were going to be sailing boat for boat with them as we had the same handicap rating. What we found was a combination of valuable and concerning. In these light wind practice runs we were slightly faster going upwind but no match for them downwind with their dramatically larger spinnaker. The take away message was that we were going to have to take advantage of our first leg speed and try and hold them off downwind. The other option was to pray for more breeze.

The event was sailed with the Performance Handicap Rating Formula where boats are rated for speed based on their known performance factors. The fleet was broken into two classes of multihulls. We were in the class with the smaller boats. At 25 feet overall we were one of the smallest boats in our class but because of our design we were rated among the fastest. To win a race, we had to finish first and beat the other boats by more than our required handicapped time.

After a crew dinner/strategy session that evening we felt we were ready to go. The next day's racing was inauspiciously postponed due to lack of wind. After a 2 hour delay a steady breeze appeared and the fleet headed for the race course. A steady 10 to 12 knot breeze held long enough for the race committee to run 3 races. As we expected, our friends on Triumph were our main competition with the two of us trading first and second places on the race course with finishes depending on the latest wind shift, breeze line and mark rounding. The other competitors in our class were constantly in the mix but at the end of the day the two of us had traded first and second place finishes to leave us one point behind in the standings.

As we had predicted the two boats were very close in speed with our competitors being well prepared and well practiced, having sailed their boat for a number of seasons. On the other hand, we were rapidly climbing the learning curve, optimizing our boat and sail handling every race. We clearly had an edge in more wind while Triumph was better in the lighter conditions.

Next day of racing rolled in the same as the first day with a bit more breeze to start. In the 12-14 knot conditions the larger Corsair 28 excelled. We had a

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back-and-forth battle with them for 5 races with the advantage going to Triumph. At the end of the day, we were now behind 3 points with one more day of racing to go. With them rarely finishing worse than second place it looked as though we might have to win every race the next day to have a shot at the overall win. The good news was the forecast called for breezy conditions. We could hardly wait!



The next day dawned bright and clear with a 15 to 25 knot South-east breeze churning Sarasota Bay.

STELLA! was ready to romp. In these conditions STELLA! will sail at 10 to 11 knots upwind and 15 to 20 knots downwind, similar to a racing monohull such as a TP 52. As our competition were shortening sail, we got STELLA! set up for the conditions.

The race committee set 4 mile windward / leeward courses as they had the first two days. The first race we nailed the favored pin end start and led from start to finish to take our first win of the day. The second race I mistimed the weather end start and started late at the committee boat. We had to battle back the entire race and if only for the fact that the breeze was now dropping a bit and Triumph was now underpowered with their reefed sail let us back into the lead for a close win. Two down. One to go.

The third and final race would determine the winner. The breeze was now up and down and the two boats were essentially even on the race course. Taking an even start Triumph headed to the left side of the racecourse with us on their right. As luck would have it, the wind shifted to favor them and they led at the first two marks.

At the second mark they headed again for the left side of the course. We tacked away to the right. Inexplicably they chose not to protect their lead and tack in front of us. Soon we found that we were in more wind and a favorable shift. When we crossed tracks again at the next mark, we were now ahead with a solid 50-yard lead. We rounded the last mark, set our spinnaker for the last run, caught a 20-knot puff of wind and never looked back.

We had done it. We had the needed wins and when the points were counted it turned out we had some to spare as some of the other boats had beaten Triumph in two of the races.

During the trophy presentation the Squadron had an extra special trophy that they were planning to give us. On leaving New Orleans I had stopped by Canseco's and picked up a couple of King Cakes to share with the volunteers and competitors. They were such a hit that the Squadron presented us with a Stella Artois Kegerator as an additional trophy to our first-place win. We are hoping to find a good home for it as it is a little to big for the bar at the house.



Many thanks to all who helped with this including my ace crew, mechanic, driver and son Henry. Kudos to Randy Smyth for getting the boat and sails dialed in and doing trim and tactics onboard. Thanks to the team at Quorning Boats/ Dragonfly for producing a spectacular sailing machine. Special thanks to the volunteers and staff at the Sarasota Sailing Squadron for hosting this great event!

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