

Ron Sherry US-44 2011 IDNIYRA Gold Cup Championship Report

I finally had time to work on my own equipment with all the orders filled, lots of extra parts made, and charter boats organized, aligned and shimmed.

I checked the profile and shimmed 20 sets of runners, that's right 60 runners. Most of them had been prepped before but still a huge task. Joerg, Oreka, Rudy, Jost and Dideric arrived. We had a wonderful dinner at Maria and Leon LeBeau's home. We worked on everyone's equipment to make ready for the 2011 Worlds and North Americans, but where would we sail? We waited at home as long as we could. The call was made to go to Menominee. So we loaded everything, left Friday morning and drove 9 hours over the Mackinac Bridge up to the upper peninsula of Michigan and west to Menominee. We stopped at the launch site at about 5:00 p.m. on our way to the hotel. We found 18 inches of black translucent ice as far as we could see. It was 15 degrees and blowing 15 kts. It was very cold. There were lots of cars and trailers on the ice. The ice had some bumps but it was really good. We checked in at the hotel and went to the Bar/Restaurant where all the competitors were hanging out. Catching up with friends from all over the world is what this sport is all about. From now on we should make sure the headquarters for all events have a bar/restaurant for everyone to hang out at, even if it costs a little more or is farther from the launch site.

We settled in with our friends hoping to set up and practice on Saturday but it started to snow. We were only expected to get 2 inches but we got a good 6 inches. The next morning the drifts were over the runner plank. The executive committee and scouts everywhere started looking for alternative sites. After a long discussion by the race and executive committee, the decision was made to move to Putnam, Illinois. In the mean time Jan Gougeon and I gave a question and answer session in a conference room that was well attended and really fun. We answered questions about runners and tuning for different conditions and told stories about the 1982 Worlds in Klein Vitenzee, Germany.

The executive committee made an important decision moving the fleet down to Putnam, Illinois. Registration was to be from 8:00 to 10:00 Sunday morning, opening ceremony and skipper's meeting on the ice at 11:00 and racing to start at 13:00. This decision was made because a huge snowstorm was due to hit on Tuesday and wipe out all possible remaining ice sites. We loaded everything up and drove 8 hours south to Putnam as fast as we could. When we arrived and checked in the western region team had set up registration Saturday night for those who wanted it. This was great because it allowed us to go straight to the ice Sunday morning and set up the boats. Loretta got the registered boats entered in the computer and came down for opening ceremonies with the starting positions.

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It is always a powerful experience to see all the flags and hear the national anthem from each country represented. It is also a great time for the skipper's meeting, introductions, ice conditions, and announcements of planned events. After all this it was out to the racecourse. I had my A boat painted and had not sailed it for 2 years, so it was important to get out early. I took out 3 sails and 8 sets of runners. The sails were my FO1, ABSS, and MS1. Runners were travel plate runners, 2 sets of 3/16 with wings, 1 set of 3/16 X 36" without wings, 1 set of 3/16 X 30" without wings (100 degrees), 1 set of min "T's"(100 degrees), and snow plates. The wind had been blowing hard all morning but as the day went on it got lighter and lighter. Senachwine Lake is 3 miles long and 1 mile wide. Unfortunately the wind was blowing across the lake. The Race Committee set up as long a course as possible but at the windward mark there was very little wind and it was shifting a lot. It reminded me of Lipno in the Czech Republic.

I put my FO1 on and left my travel plates on and went around the course once. The boat was way too stiff so I loosened my head stay 1 inch. Now I could easily put my side stay on the plank without help. I sailed another lap. The boat was better, but still a little too stiff. So I moved the mast step ½ inch forward without changing the head stay. I went sailing again and the boat felt great.

There was snow over 50% of the ice with some drifts up to 3" and sticky. It was hard to get to warp speed. When you got to warp speed you would hit a big snowdrift and have to start all over to get up to speed. It was really important to move forward and backward in the cockpit for leverage and sheet the sail in and out to try to get every ounce of speed out of the boat you could. In tuning the mast, I did not want the boat so soft that it would not hike, but I did not want to boat to snap up on hikes to quickly either. I wanted the boat to hike slowly so I could easily counter the hike with the sheet.

The race committee ran the Bronze mini qualifier and John Davenport easily won. I went over and checked his runners 3/16 X 36", no wings, 19" of .008 flat. The air was getting lighter.

The Silver mini qualifier was really tricky. There were lots of lead changes. The race was won by S-794 Oskar Wersall who used 3/16 inserts. Oskar ended up 20th in the gold fleet overall. Leon LeBeau, Mike Rehe and Jost Kolb just missed qualifying for Gold. They needed just a little more wind.

The first Gold fleet race started at 4:31. I started in position 4 with Rob Holman in position 2. We talked before the race. We discussed what we thought the wind was doing based on what we saw in the last 2 races. My plan was to get the boat going and head right as soon as possible. The wind was really light. I was using my old super full FO1. I had my 3/16 X 36 inch inserts with wings on. These runners have 18" of .008 flat. The runners were getting stuck in the drifts.

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I would have been better off with my snow plates or minimum "T's". I did all 3 laps without realizing that the race was black-flagged.

I was changing my runners back to my travel runners thinking that I had finished the first race in the high teens. I asked Jost Kolb who had won. He kept saying Michal Burczynski was leading the first lap. I said to him yes but who won. Finally I understood the race was black-flagged. Oh what a relief that was. I told Jost that's a good thing, he said yes, yes. Wahoo, the whole gold fleet was going in tied for first.

I carefully checked my runners, no nicks, put my sails and runners in the trailer and headed for the hotel. I ate a big spaghetti dinner and went to bed because gold fleet would start first on Monday morning. There was a big storm due to arrive Tuesday, so I knew Monday was going to be the big day.

We got up Monday morning and I ate as much as I could at breakfast. We went to the ice and I questioned if runners and sails used in a black flagged race must be used for the rest of the regatta. The answer was yes, if you used a sail or runners in the first black flagged race you must use them for the regatta.

It was blowing 20 knots plus Monday morning and the ice was bumpy. The race committee moved the racecourse down the lake another 2 ½ miles. There was less snow but some cracks to deal with. I loaded everything up and headed down to the starting area. I put my ABSS sail on even though it was blowing up to 25 kts. There were still snow patches and light air to deal with at the weather mark. I lowered my halyard 1 inch for the high winds and flatter sail. I sailed the course with my travel runners and my ABSS sail. It was scary fast, bumpy, and high winds with huge puffs. The air got light at the weather mark and though there was less snow, it was still sticky.

I was happy with my choice of the ABSS sail and decision to stay with my 3/16 winged runners. John Harper and I talked about sails. John was convinced the MS1 gave him more confidence he could control his boat. I had already measured in my full FO1 and knew more snow was on the way and thought I needed a medium sail to deal with the drifts and lulls. One sailor came up to me and said it is too dangerous to race with the ice bumps and high winds. They can't possibly race. He said his heart was coming out of his chest when he sailed. I told him that today was the only day to race with the snow coming. I told him to get his heart and his boat ready because we were going to race today.

I thank the Toledo Ice Yacht Club for all the high wind training we did on Walled Lake and Maumee Bay. The 2011 Western Regional was also sailed in high winds and drifts. In Putman I was not scared at all. I started again the 4th position. This was good because if someone pushed me up to slow me down, I could tack away to clear my air. I started the first race going left and went ½ way

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across before I tacked. On port tack the wind was blowing 25 knots as I crossed the fleet. I crossed everyone who had started on port. I tacked back to starboard and came into the weather mark in about 9th place. Two boats passed me from the right side and 6 rounded ahead of me who went further left than I did. There were so many boats just in front of me that I decided to jibe just after the weather mark to clear my air. This worked great because I came into the first leeward mark in 4th place.

P-13 Dariusz Kardas lead the first lap and never looked back. P-55 Tomasz Zakrezewski was in 2nd and P-114 Michal Burczynski was 3rd. On the 2nd lap I traded positions with P-114 and moved up to 3rd place. US-4691 John Dennis moved from 12th place to 9th place. On the 3rd lap P-114 and myself passed P-55. I was really happy to be in 2nd after all that. P-13 was first and P-114 was 3rd. P-55 and his brother, P-155 Tomasz Zakrezewski were 4th and 5th. I felt really good about my set up and runner choice. I did not change anything for the rest of the day.

They ran the 2nd Silver fleet race, which was won by Mike Rehe. It was a shame Mike did not qualify for Gold because in these conditions he could have been a real threat to be on the podium.

They lined up the Gold fleet for the 2nd race. I started in position 2 with P-55 to leeward of me in 4th position. I tacked across the middle again and was in 5th or 6th at the 1st weather mark. Down wind I passed boats and rounded the first leeward mark in 3rd place with P-55 in 1st, P-114 in 2nd and G-737 Jörg Bohn in 4th. On the second lap P-114 passes P-55. I remained in 3rd place and G-737 was in 4th. On the 3rd lap I closed the distance on the 2 Polish sailors.

I learned again how important it is to get down in the boat and tuck in your elbows. When I did this, I was able to sail higher and faster than the lighter weight Polish sailors. At the last weather mark P-114 was first, P-55 was 2nd and I was 3rd. All within 5 boat lengths P-114 jibed immediately after the mark, P-55 after him and I went about 50 yards and jibed to try and keep my air clear. The 2 Polish sailors increased their lead. This gave me a good view of what was happening in front of me. P-114 jibed back quickly only after about ¼ mile and crossed P-55 closely. As I crossed P-114 I noticed he was headed at the finish line so I jibed right away, while P-55 continued on. A huge puff with a left shift was carrying P- 114 and myself towards the finish line. I was headed below the finish line, but I knew the puff would not last all the way to the end. P-55 jibed and was over stood heading for the finish line. I was bow out and going fast. P-55 was pushing his boat as hard as he could, trying to pass me.

All of the sudden poooof, I could see nothing but a cloud of snow. P-55 had broken his side chock off and spun out. I looked back ahead of me and P-114 had to jibe to make the finish line. I carried the same puff across the finish line.

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P-114 and I finished overlapped, but I was behind by a few feet. G-737 finished 3rd. John Dennis was in the top 7 coming into the 1st weather mark, but clipped a cone guarding the weather mark and had to retire. After 2 races P-114 and I were tied with 4 points each.

The race committee ran a Bronze fleet race, which was won by Graham Irwin Terry Irwin's son.

After this it was back to the starting line for the gold fleet. Again I started in the 2nd position this time with S-81 Tomas Lindgren to leeward of me. P-55 went in, in between races and got a spare plank out of the PIS trailer, drywall screwed it to the bottom of his boat and made the start of race 3. Not only that, he was 3rd at the first weather mark. I was in 4th place but this was John Dennis' race from start to finish.

This was John's first race win in a Gold Cup event. There is no better feeling in the world than winning a Gold fleet race in the gold cup. This gives a guy hope that anything is possible in this world. And no one can ever take that feeling away.

On the second beat, I went from 4th to 2nd and I saw a bald eagle flying way up straight above me. I could not believe my eyes. This calms me down. I knew everything was going to be all right. I thought of Ed Kraft, US 555, 1978 North American Champion. I spent 4 hours with Ed Kraft 2 days before he died of congestive heart failure in the fall. We talked about the great old times of summer and winter sailing. We went to Europe together in '82, '84, and '86. We talked especially about Krynica Morska, Poland in '84, how he saved Henry Bossett's life one night, how we teased the interpreters who had our rooms and dinner table bugged. We drank a Manhattan together. I asked him what was the most fun he had in his life. He told me, "Ice boating, Ronnie, no doubt about it, ice boating."

In the 3rd race P-114 had his main sheet get caught around his bob stay, which sticks out the back of his boat. Luckily he was able to spin out his boat without running into anyone, untangle his main sheet, and finish the race.

The race committee ran race 3 for the Silver fleet, which was won by Z-50 Philippe Durr from Switzerland. After this race 3 for the Bronze fleet was won by Tim Dixon.

We lined up for the 4th Gold fleet race. For this race and the last race P-31 Robert Graczyk started in the 4th position. They never let me have a good start. Being able to tack away and having great boat speed and pointing made all the difference. In race 4, I tacked away after the start and came into the weather

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mark in about 5th place. I remember this because down wind I sailed a little high on starboard tack to keep my air clear. I wanted to jibe with P-114 and P-31, but M-53 Peter Hamrak carried me out to the right side. Finally I got a puff, got around M-53 and jibed. The right side worked because M-53 and myself were 1st and 2nd for the next 2 laps. I decided to keep using the right side down wind because it worked so well on the first down wind leg.

On the last down wind leg P-114 jibed immediately after the weather mark. At the finish P-114 passed M-53 and I to win race 4. I saw P-114 coming from the left side down wind we crossed the finish line over lapped. Neither one of us was sure who won. When we spoke after the race I thought he won, he thought I won. Smiles and congratulations were exchanged.

The 4th Silver fleet race was next. Mike Rehe had a huge lead followed by Jost Kolb and Chris Clark. There was a collision at the leeward mark. There were boat parts and sailors on the ice. The race committee brought out the black flag and stopped the race. Boats were damaged but the people were okay.

This was the second time this year I saw a 3-boat collision as a result of a boat coming from behind and trying to put his boat in at the leeward mark.

The race committee ran the 4th Bronze fleet race, which was won again by the Bronze fleet champion Tim Dixon. After this they reran the 4th Silver fleet race, which was won by Chris Clark.

In between the 4th and 5th race the wind was getting lighter. I was really tempted to change to my "T" runners. I kept asking Leon Lebeau if I should change. He would not say a word. Later, he told me what he was thinking. Are you crazy? You have had all great finishes and you want to change something. Do you ever listen to what you preach?

Going into the 5th Gold race, I was in 1st place with four 2nd place finishes, but after 5 races, there would be a throw out. When you looked at the points, P-114 was 1st with 5 points, US-44 was 2nd with 6 points, tied for 3rd was P-155 and S- 81 with 15 points, P-31 was 5th with 16 points, P-13 was 6th with 17 points, US- 4691 was 7th with 18 points, P-55 was 8th with 20 points.

I knew there was a storm coming and this could be the last race. With a 2 as a throw out, I needed to beat P-114 or have him finish 4th place or worse. At the 1st weather mark I was in 6th place again and P-114 was ahead of me. US-4691 was off to another monster lead. I jibed down the left side of the course early. When I jibed back to starboard to go towards the leeward mark I saw P-114 jibe to weather and behind me. At the 1st leeward mark US-4691 was leading, US-3283 Bruce Williams was 2nd, I was 3rd, and P-114 was 4th. I passed

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US-3283 shortly after the 1st leeward mark and decided to relax and let good "OLD" US 4691 decide my tactics the rest of the race.

After the 2nd lap, US-4691 was still leading, and I was 2nd. P-155 came from 11th on the 1st lap all the way to 3rd on the 2nd lap. On the 3rd lap I decided to follow US-4691 again. We were sailing out to the right corner upwind to where there were cones marking a crack, which had eaten 2 boats. On the 2nd lap, we tacked just short of the cones. On the 3rd lap we went just past the cones.

I remember getting within 3 boat lengths of US-4691 at the last weather mark, but he did a better job of using the puff we got just after the weather mark and gained. I jibed down the middle to try to pass him and to cover P-114. US-4691 was 1st, I was 2nd, P-155 was 3rd, P-114 was 4th, US-60 John Harper was 5th, with his best finish of the event. After racing we were headed in and I had the lead. When would the storm come? Most people took their boats off the ice. We had to leave our boats on in case we raced tomorrow.

In the morning the RC went and checked the ice. It had snowed 2 – 3 inches and drifted. The wind was blowing in the high 20s steady with puffs into the high 30s and the storm of the century was due to start at noon. The RC and executive committee called the regatta complete. The awards were given at the pool and the committee started looking for ice for the North American Championship.

We picked up our boats and decided to drive home in the precipus of the storm. There we waited for the decision on where the North Americans would be. The 2011 North Americans were not to be.

What made the difference this year was lots of practice and tuning in similar condition, the new mast and the new ABSS, great travel partners and a family who loves and supports me. Congratulations to everyone who competed.

RESULTS

Gold

- | | | | |
|----|---------|-------------------|--------|
| 1. | US-44 | Ron Sherry | 8 pts |
| 2. | P-114 | Michal Burczynski | 9 pts |
| 3. | P-155 | Lukasz Zakrzewski | 18 pts |
| 4. | US-4691 | John Dennis | 19 pts |

Silver

- | | | | |
|----|---------|-------------|--------|
| 1. | US-5144 | Mike Rehe | 17 pts |
| 2. | G-936 | Jost Kolb | 23 pts |
| 3. | US-4789 | Chris Clark | 33 pts |
| 4. | US-5432 | Mike Bloom | 33 pts |

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Bronze

- | | | | |
|----|---------|-----------------------|--------|
| 1. | US-4148 | Tim Dixon | 9 pts |
| 2. | Z-57 | Jerome Durr | 15 pts |
| 3. | H-467 | Dideric Van Reimsdijk | 19 pts |
| 4. | US-246 | Graham Erwin | 20 pts |

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