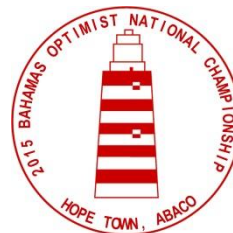


2015 Bahamas Opti National Championships

Hope Town

October 16-18, 2015



The Opti National Championship weekend was a great success by any measure. Our goal was met with 73 original registrations. (However, due to Hurricane Joachin and the two week postponement, we missed the team of 17 from Mack Knowles Junior Sailing Club in Long Island, and a few more who could not re-schedule.) We were able to hold every scheduled race, every social event was an outstanding success, and Tahiti Beach was a wonderful location for the regatta.

Friday: The weekend began Friday afternoon with registration and sign-in at the Tahiti Beach Regatta Site. The site had been prepared and cleared thanks to Clay Wilhoyte and his crew.



Everything was in place: tents, food booths, race committee notice boards, porta-pottis, trash cans, electrical cords, picnic tables, signs, water stations, sailors' "goody bags" and T-shirts, and merchandise for sale.

Optis from the other islands had been shipped in a container, which was off-loaded at White Sound.

Sailors found their boats, and sailed or towed them to Tahiti Beach. Eventually all the boats were lined up along the beach along with their equipment.



For those sailors who were ready, there was an optional practice race at 4pm. It was a chance for the sailors to test their boats and become familiar with the racing area, and an opportunity for the two race committees (Championship Fleet and Green Fleet) to practice their skills.



The Welcome Dinner was held at Firefly Resort - a beautiful venue for the first official event of the weekend. The complimentary junior sailors' buffet won rave reviews from the kids, and the adult menu was equally delicious. Regatta Chairman Matt McCoy welcomed the sailors and their families, as well as the many local fans of Hope Town Junior Sailing who attended the event.

Saturday: Racers' Breakfast was served at Tahiti Beach bright and early (7:30 am). At 8:30 Fernando de Cardenas from the Bahamas Sailing Association (BSA) - Race Committee Chairman for the event - held a Skippers' Meeting. At 9:30 a horn was blown, permitting the sailors to launch their boats, and at 10:00 am the warning signal flag for the first race was raised.



The two Race Committees had been organized by Paul Gooding in the months prior to the event.

The Championship Fleet had Fernando de Cardenas as the Principal Race Officer (PRO), with Eric Patterson as committee boat captain, and official scorers on board. Jimmie and Lori Lowe from the BSA were the Jury boat, aboard Philip Yasinski's Albury 20 "The Gig".

The Green Fleet's PRO was Paul Gooding, using his boat "Panda" as committee boat, with Ann Gooding and additional scorers on board.

Jeff Gale and Sue Holloway provided the two mark boats for the two fleets. In addition, there were two coach boats (who are allowed to help sailors bringing up the rear), and three safety boats were assigned to each fleet. A total of 13 attending vessels!



Two morning races and two afternoon races were held in light to moderate NE winds. The Green Fleet races were located right off Tahiti Beach, making it easier for the younger sailors to access the race course. The Championship Fleet race course was much longer, and was located near the north tip of Lubber's Quarters.



Lunch between races was a festive affair at Tahiti Beach. There was a complimentary Racers' menu, and a great selection of food for purchase from local providers: Mackey's Take-Out, Papa Nasty's BBQ, and Mike Jones' conch salad and crawfish salad. Island beach music was provided compliments of Big Red all weekend, adding to the atmosphere. Many local families came to watch, have lunch, and enjoy beach activities with the junior sailors.



The dark squall line to the south stayed away, allowing perfect weather for the afternoon races.

Then the boats were secured, race committee gear was stowed, merchandise was stored away, and race results were calculated.

Everyone re-convened in Hope Town Settlement for the evening "block party".

The Abaco Rage crew provided grilled hamburgers and hot dogs at Jarret Park for the junior sailors, while the adults enjoyed a delicious buffet at the Harbour's Edge.

Junior Sailors (and artists) Bessie Lowe and Alexis Cook showed their home town loyalty on the Edge's reader board.

Live entertainment was provided compliments of Shane Cash and his guitar.



Sunday: The day began again at 7:30 with Racers' Breakfast at Tahiti Beach; then the sailors got their boats ready for the scheduled two races. The wind had increased from the NNE during the night, which was welcomed by the older Championship Fleet, which actually scheduled a third race for Sunday morning, since the races would be fast.



However, the younger (and lighter-weight) sailors of the Green Fleet were challenged by the extra wind and choppy seas. There were some capsizes and recoveries, some who had difficulty getting around the course, and a couple who had to drop out. Nevertheless, after the first race which tested their courage, most of the Green Fleet sailors were still eager to sail the second race.

The coach boats and safety boats had an easy day on Saturday, but Sunday's windy conditions made their presence very valuable.

Lunch on the beach was as good as Saturday, as well as the beach activities. However, it was time to pack up the boats, put away the race committee equipment, clear up all the booths at Tahiti Beach, and calculate race results.

The Awards Presentation and Dinner was held at the Abaco Inn. (See Race Results). The ceremony began with a prayer; then the Hope Town School Choir sang the National Anthem in beautiful two-part harmony. Every participating Junior Sailor received a medal on a neck ribbon to commemorate their experience. Then the winners were called up to receive their trophies.



The major awards were made in Abaco by local artists: Abaco Dinghy Rib Half-Hulls by Bill County, Abaco Dinghy painted half-hulls by Joe Albury, and canvas bags with sewn-on engraved plaques by Nakia Wilhoyte (Hope Town Canvas) for the top female winners.



The Bahamas Opti Champion is **Branden Sands** from Cherokee - the **FIRST** sailor from the Family Islands to win the award in its eleven-year history! Branden took the microphone to thank the junior sailing programs from Hope Town and Man-O-War who have supported him through the years, as well as training at the Bahamas National Sailing School in Nassau. It is Branden's last year in Optis, so it is a very special award to him. Branden's name will be engraved on the Geoffrey Holowasko Perpetual Trophy along with all previous Champions.

The Awards presentation was attended by a large crowd of sailors and their parents, and many local families who came out to cheer for their Hope Town team. The Abaco Inn provided a complimentary Racers' Buffet, and an adults' buffet with a wide selection. Kent Le Boutillier baked cup-cakes frosted with Bahamian flag colors, set on each table - as delicious as they were decorative. The Abaco Inn's many Opti Flags, outdoor light strings, and special touches, along with Big Red's island music, made it a memorable event.



The Opti Nationals Committee from Hope Town worked hard to make this event a success. But the Abaco businesses and individual donors actually made it possible. At first the Committee considered ordering "sponsor stickers" to put on the Optis, as in prior years. But we soon understood that there was not enough room on an Opti for all the stickers that would be necessary! The banner below shows all our sponsors and supporters, and was displayed at Tahiti Beach and the Awards Dinner.

2015 BAHAMAS OPTIMIST NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

 	Abaco Gold Abaco Groceries Abaco Multihull Charters Abaco Paddleboard Abaco Rage Sailing Syndicate David & Catherine Allin Doug & Linda Behrendt Ellie & Rick Block Blue Moon Brass & Leather C&C Waste Management & Trucking	Chelsea's Choice Classic Marine Katherine Desousa Kitty & Dave Donnan Elbow Cay Carts Attila Festz John Foster David & Vicki Fuger Gone Bananas on Lubbers Paul & Ann Gooding	Grumpy Ol' Men Crew Tom Hazel Jack & Betsy Helm Caitlin Hevey George & Sue Holloway Sam & Anne Hummel Island Cart Rentals JR's Cart Rentals Betty Klein Lighthouse Marina	Om Grown Greens Stafford & Debbie Patterson Kim Rody The Conch Inn & Marina The Great Abaco Express The Original Patties Bakery Bill & Maureen Torgeson Heinz & Jacqueline Weber Caroline Wight Clay & Lisa Wilhoyte	
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