

What's In a Name?

by Pam Miller, Venice Bitter Ends

Photos by Rita Root of the Dunedin Windlasses

With boat names like *Wild Thing*, *Max Wind*, *Hot Flash*, *License to Keel* and *Wild Child*, the Florida Women's Sailing Association's (FWSA) 2022 Rainbow Regatta was bound to be exciting. The FWSA's signature sailing event was successfully held in early April at the Davis Island Yacht Club on Hillsborough Bay. The event was being held after a two-year hiatus due to COVID. Ninety-one sailors were scheduled to compete in Sunfish, Clearwater Prams and International Optimist Dinghies (IOD).

The event was hosted by the Dinghy Dames of Davis Island and the Mainsheet Mamas of Tampa Yacht and Country Club. The two clubs experimented by adding a practice day the day before the regatta. Over half of the competitors planned to sail on the practice day but the wind ended up being extremely light at ~4 mph. Six Sunfish sailors, 5 Bitter Ends sailors of Venice and 1 Luffing Lassie from Sarasota, made it to their racecourse and completed two very short races.

The Pram and IOD races were abandoned due to the light wind. These sailors and the other Sunfish sailors who never made it to their course paddled back to shore. After the frustration of little to no wind, the sailors were awarded with a wonderful Sail Gate party hosted by the Mainsheet Mamas at the home of Jennifer Holmburg on a Davis Island canal. The sailors shared their concern for the predicted winds Tuesday morning while enjoying cocktails and hors d'oeuvres.

Tuesday morning winds were out of the south bringing in not only high winds but big waves. All the sailors rigged their boats, but much discussion ensued on the advisability of heading out onto the bay. Margo Currey and Donna Sue Marks, Principal Race Officers on the two courses, recommended sailors go out and do two tacks and two gibes. After performing these two basic sailing maneuvers sailors were advised if they felt the wind was too strong for their capability, they should head back to shore.

Many of the less experienced sailors found the 3-foot waves and 15+ mph winds with gusts too high for their skill set. Seventy-five percent of sailors competed in at least one race. The Sunfish fleet had thirty-six of sixty-three sailors complete all 3 races and the majority of Pram and IOD sailors did both their races.

In several of the races, some sailors were over the start line early. The race committee sounded the 'over early' signal but none of the racers heard the signal in the high wind so they could return and redo their start. This resulted in the sailors being disqualified from the races where they were over early. This was disappointing for two sailors since it resulted in them not finishing at the top of their fleets.

This year's race had an addition of a Rookie award for sailors who had been racing for one year and were competing in their first Rainbow Regatta. The winner of the Sunfish Rookie award was Sandy Vaughan of the Bitter Ends sailing in *Snappy*. Sandy capsized at the windward mark in the first race but was able to right the boat. She completed all 3 races and came in 33rd place overall. Quite a feat battling the winds and waves and controlling her boat. As Sandy received her award, she commented "I'm so pleased I didn't kill anybody out there!"

In the Clearwater Prams fleet, Bijie Ding of the St. Petersburg Broad Reachers won the Rookie award. She was the youngest sailor in all the fleets at 28 years of age, while the Venice Bitter Ends had the oldest sailor competing in a Sunfish at age 87.

On the Sunfish course several sailors capsized. The sailors were able to easily right their boat except for one sailor whose boat had turtled. The hull of the boat was completely upside down. She finished watching the races from a safety boat. After the races were completed safety personnel helped right her boat and towed it safely back to shore.

On shore it was interesting to learn how some of the boats were named. A personal favorite was the story for the moniker *Wild Thing*. As a new sailor, Marge Whiteman of the Bitter Ends was sailing a rental boat named *Watch*

Out. As she was attempting to perform a tack, she lost control of her boat and crashed into another boat. The other sailor quickly called out “you’re just a *Wild Thing*”. When Marge purchased her own boat, it only seemed fitting to christen it *Wild Thing*. Readers will be pleased to know Marge is now an experienced sailor and completed all three races on the course without incident.

The FWSA was founded in 1973 and has nine member clubs along the Southwest coast of Florida with more than seven hundred women racing once a week at their respective sailing clubs. The Bitter Ends of Venice are part of the FWSA and sail out of Higel Park and the facilities of the Venice Youth Boating Association at Venice Yacht Club. They race on Wednesday mornings September through May. Membership is open to the public for women who have experience in sailing. Information about club requirements can be found at www.bitterendsvenice.com.

Race Results:

Sunfish Fleet: 1st place (Lisa Brown Ehrhart, Dinghy Dames in Wild Child), 2nd place (Emily Wagner, Dinghy Dames), 3rd place (Lee Parks, Luffing Lassies), 4th place (Beth Owens, Dinghy Dames in Salty Girl), 5th place (Linda Schwartz, Luffing Lassies in Max Wind).

Clearwater Prams: 1st place (Nancy Kadau, Salty Sisters), 2nd place (Robin Babka, Windlasses), 3rd place (Susan Foote, Windlasses), 4th place (Gillian Whatmore, Luffing Lassies), 5th place (Els Wiemken, Salty Sisters).

International Optimist Dinghies: 1st place (Vanessa Beckman, Salty Sisters in License to Keel), 2nd place (Joanne Simmons, Salty Sisters in Ardith), 3rd place (Sandra Merrifield, Salty Sisters in Angels), 4th place (Gina Bowden-Pierce, Salty Sisters in Edie), 5th place (Carol Hansen, Salty Sisters).

Photos w/ Possible Captions:



The Florida Women’s Sailing Association’s Sunfish fleet lined up and ready to launch from the point at Davis Island Yacht Club which sits on Hillsborough Bay in Tampa.



The start of the Sunfish fleets second race of the day with 36 boats competing. Seven boats dropped out of the regatta after the first race due to the high winds and rolling waves.



A Sunfish sailor competes in the FWSA Rainbow Regatta working to control her boat from submarining going downwind in the waves.



The FWSA Sunfish fleet going downwind toward the leeward mark. The course had two leeward marks and sailors had to decide which was the more favored side of the course when they headed back upwind.



Janet Molen of Venice in #4349 works to keep her boat flat by hiking out. Shortly after this photo was taken, Janet lost control of her boat and capsized. Her boat turtled and couldn't be righted until all the races were completed. Also pictured are Ann Carroll of Venice in #80095 and Janet McCoid of Sarasota in #5067.



Sandy Vaughan, center, of the Venice Bitter Ends receives the FWSA Sunfish rookie award. Beth Owens, left, and Jennifer Holmberg, right, applaud her achievement. This was Sandy's first Rainbow Regatta and her first full year of racing with the Bitter Ends.



Lisa Brown Ehrhart of the Luffing Lassies of Sarasota shows off her boat on Monday afternoon before the races. Lisa truly is a *Wild Child* and her handling of her boat in high winds and rough waters earned her the 1st place award in the Sunfish fleet.