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Exciting changes planned for 2015 Annapolis-to-Newport Race

New classes, new Newport headquarters, new venue for all-hands awards party

ANNAPOLIS, MD (June 5, 2014) — Men like Gaither Scott, Ron Ward and Chip Thayer helped build the Annapolis-to-Newport Race into one of the finest sailboat racing events on the East Coast. Those Annapolis Yacht Club race committee chairmen, with assistance from longtime AYC Sailing Director Jack Lynch, molded the race connecting two of the world's most historic seaports into an offshore classic with tremendous history and tradition.

Stewards of Annapolis-to-Newport are careful to maintain the elements that have always made the race so appealing while adding new features and innovations to make it more attractive to the next generation of offshore sailors.

Longtime Annapolis Yacht Club members Dick Neville and Mark Myers have taken over as co-chairs of the Annapolis-to-Newport Race and are pleased to announce several changes designed to spark renewed interest and increased participation.

"I love everything about the Annapolis-to-Newport Race and have always wanted to see it grow and develop a higher profile," said Myers, who has competed in the biennial event eight times. "We must constantly think out of the box about ways we can make it better, and I think the developments we have planned for next year will be well received by participants old and new."

The 35th edition of the Annapolis-to-Newport Race will begin one year from today – Friday, June 5, 2015. One of the notable changes is that starts will be divided with the slower boats departing Annapolis on Friday morning and the faster boats leaving on Saturday. Those classes starting on Friday will sail a slightly shorter course that does not require rounding Chesapeake Light after entering the Atlantic Ocean. Grand prix classes, all of which will start on Saturday, will sail the traditional 475-nautical mile course.

"Our goal is to get all the boats to Newport earlier and closer together," Neville said. "We believe cutting the corner after exiting the Chesapeake Bay will enable the smaller boats to finish several hours earlier than usual."

Carrera, a Farr 60 owned by Joseph Dockery and skippered by Annapolis professional Chris Larson, set the Annapolis-Newport course record in 2001 – covering the 475-nautical mile passage in 42 hours, 56 minutes and 12 seconds. *Rambler*, a water-ballasted, 90-foot racing machine owned by George David of New York City, came up just under four hours short in its attempt to break the record last year.

Another exciting addition to Annapolis-Newport will be the Performance Cruising Class, which is designed to introduce distance racing to a different segment of sailors. Neville said there are many outstanding cruising designs on the water, such as Beneteau, C&C, J/Boats, Jeanneau, Sabre, Swan and Tartan, that are ideal for sailing from Annapolis to Newport.

“By far the biggest untapped potential for distance racing involves cruising boats. There are many skippers of cruising boats that would like to do a great race like Annapolis-to-Newport, but just don’t know how to go about it. We will conduct seminars, provide instructional materials and perform other outreach activities aimed at encouraging and teaching these types of sailors to give offshore racing a try.”

Garth Hichens, former owner of Annapolis Yacht Sales, is serving as Participation Chairman and will spearhead the recruitment of cruising sailors in particular. Bruce Bingman will oversee a PHRF consortium that will produce rating certificates specifically for the Annapolis-to-Newport race and will take into consideration cruising features of various designs.

As always, Annapolis Yacht Club will host the “Skipper’s Welcome Reception” on Thursday, June 4 – a traditional cocktail party sendoff that has become a favorite of participants. There will be a new venue for the All-Hands Awards Party, which brings skippers and crews together for a celebration of winners of various classes and perpetual trophies.

In 2015, the All-Hands Awards party will be held at the New York Yacht Club’s fabulous Harbour Court facility. Standing on eight acres overlooking Brenton’s Cove, the Renaissance Norman-style mansion was completed in 1906 for former New York Yacht Club commodore John Nicholas Brown. In 1987, the Brown family sold the beautiful piece of property to the New York Yacht Club and it has hosted numerous major regattas and events ever since.

“Harbour Court is a wonderful facility with an amazing view of Newport harbor and first-rate service in every respect,” Neville said. “Most important is that Harbour Court can accommodate a larger crowd as we anticipate increased participation.”

Also, the Newport Yachting Center will serve as race headquarters on the Newport end beginning in 2015. Located in the heart of downtown Newport with easy access to shopping and dining, the marina features 180 floating finger piers, on-site repair service, 24-hour security, a professional staff and all sorts of other amenities. Organizers will set up a race office, press office and hospitality tent at the Newport Yachting Center for the convenience of sailors while plans are for a certain number of discounted slips to be available to competing skippers.

“In the past, the competing race boats scattered upon arrival in Newport. Our hope is to bring all the boats together at one central location so the sailors can mingle, share stories about the passage and generally get to know one another,” Myers said.

Hospitality will be a foremost consideration on the front end as well with Annapolis Yacht Club creating a “Welcoming Committee” that will assist out-of-town owners with all of their needs prior to the start.

“We will be reaching out to skippers to let them know we can help them in every way possible during their stay in Annapolis,” Neville said. “Whether they need transportation or lodging, a sailmaker or rigger, we can help facilitate a variety of requests.”

There is also a new event website with <http://annapolisnewportrace.com> serving as one-stop shopping for all race information and documentation. That page is under development and will include links to various social media sites such as the Annapolis-to-Newport Facebook page and Twitter feed. Annapolis Yacht Club will issue the official Notice of Race by the end of June.

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