



PRESS RELEASE

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2017 Annapolis-to-Newport Race to Start on June 2-3

Historical biennial offshore race organized by Annapolis Yacht Club celebrates 70th anniversary with continued emphasis on innovations

Annapolis, MD (May 11, 2016) — Jim Praley has been around long enough to know you don't mess with success. The Annapolis-to-Newport Race enjoyed a resurgence in 2015 due largely to several innovations by host Annapolis Yacht Club.

Praley has been appointed chairman for the 2017 edition of Annapolis-to-Newport Race and plans to build off the momentum created by the previous organizing committee. Wooing cruising style sailboats, conducting informative seminars, installing staggered starts and ramping up the parties on both ends proved a winning formula for the venerable event.

"I thought Dick Neville, Mark Myers and their group did a terrific job of reinvigorating the race and I think we need to expand on all the good ideas they came up with," said Praley, referencing the co-chairman of the 2015 race. "Some significant structural changes were implemented and we want to do more of the same, perhaps with some slight fine-tuning."

Annapolis Yacht Club has officially announced the 36th edition of the Annapolis-to-Newport Race will begin June 2-3, 2017 on the Chesapeake Bay. Those dates are a bit earlier than normal and were chosen in order to remain in lockstep with the New York Yacht Club Annual Regatta, which has been scheduled for the following weekend.

"Last year, 14 boats that competed in the Annapolis-to-Newport Race also entered the New York Yacht Club Annual Regatta," Praley said. "Those two events have always gone hand-in-hand and we thought it was important to maintain that tradition."

Praley said a major goal of his organizing committee will involve promoting the newly installed Performance Cruising classes. That initiative succeeded in drawing a number of first-time entrants, most of whom spoke positively about their initial exposure to offshore sailboat racing.

"We still believe attracting those cruiser-racer designs is important and we need to continue to find ways to make the race more appealing to that market," Praley said. "Based on the feedback we received from various skippers in those classes, the entire process was not nearly as daunting as they imagined. Most said they would do the race again."

As an added incentive to enter the Performance Cruising classes, Annapolis Yacht Club will once again present the Manufacturer's Trophy to promote rivalry battles between various

designs. J Boats came out on top of that competition in 2015 with Beneteau giving a strong showing.

Annapolis Yacht Club helped prepare novice offshore racers by holding a series of informative seminars that covered such topics as provisioning, safety gear, weather routing and crew organization. Those seminars proved quite popular and extremely helpful.

“I thought the speakers were very knowledgeable and very succinct. They provided very specific information in an easy-to-understand manner. They pointed out some of the issues a crew can encounter during an offshore race and covered some of the solutions,” said Roger Coney, crew member aboard the Tartan 37 Solstice.

Another change that drew widespread praise involved two separate starting times. Smaller boats started on Thursday while the bigger boats started on Friday, a plan that succeeded in getting the entire fleet into Newport in closer proximity. In 2017, that plan will be slightly adjusted to make the schedule more accommodating to crews with the smaller boats starting on Friday and the bigger boats starting on Saturday. As a result of that change, the prize-giving ceremony has been pushed back to Wednesday evening.

“I think starting the smaller boats earlier is the greatest idea ever. That way, the whole fleet shows up in Newport at pretty much the same time,” said Sam September, crew member aboard the Beneteau 373 Sea Patience. “A big part of doing a major race like this is the camaraderie and it’s fun for everyone to be in Newport together for a couple days.”

Other classes introduced for the 2015 event will be offered again in 2017, notably the Classic-Corinthian, Multihull and Double-handed. “If other classes can get a strong nucleus group together, we will be happy to offer them a start as well,” Praley said.

Praley said the organizing committee will discuss ways to recognize the 70th anniversary of the Annapolis-to-Newport Race, which was established in 1947. “This is one of the older, more established ocean races on the East Coast. After 70 years, it is still going strong and getting better,” Praley said.

Annapolis Yacht Club will post the official Notice of Race in September and a discount for entries will be in place through December.

Praley has competed in the Annapolis-to-Newport Race six times, including three as skipper. The Millersville resident and his family-based crew sailed the J/120 Shinnecock to second place in PHRF 1 in 2015.

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