



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Annapolis-to-Newport race committee to conduct special seminar  
“What to Expect” when racing offshore covers all the key topics for first-timers**

ANNAPOLIS, MD (September 18, 2014) – Always wanted to enter the Annapolis-to-Newport Race, but didn’t know exactly what it entailed? Had a hankering to complete an offshore passage, but just needed a little guidance as to how to accomplish such a feat? Own a comfortable cruising type of boat and wondered whether it was capable of competing successfully in such an event?

All those questions and many, many more will be answered during the inaugural Annapolis-to-Newport Race seminar, which will be held Oct. 10 (4-6 p.m.) at the Annapolis Yacht Club. Titled “Annapolis-to-Newport: What to Expect,” the two-hour session will feature four veterans of offshore racing dispensing valuable advice and answering every possible question about what it takes to prepare for and complete the renowned 475-nautical mile race that connects two of the country’s greatest sailing towns.

Panelists will cover all the basics, beginning with a complete description of the course, which is unique because it combines both inshore and offshore elements. Skippers that attend the seminar will learn specific factors to consider in the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. Tips about routing and how to handle such interesting elements as rounding Block Island will be discussed along with how long in terms of total hours it can take to reach Newport.

Mark Myers, co-chairman of the Annapolis-to-Newport race committee, has completed the passage aboard his own boat and feels it is important to address the potential expenses. Interested skippers should know there are many ways to control costs when preparing and outfitting a boat for such an event. There are options to rent or borrow various equipment that would significantly reduce the overall budget.

“Completing the Annapolis-to-Newport Race is a challenging goal, but it is a very attainable goal. This seminar is designed to give boat owners who are considering doing the race for the first time an opportunity to get all the information they need in order to make a decision,” Myers said.

“Any offshore race involves significant effort, but I can tell you from personal experience that when you are standing on the lawn of the New York Yacht Club at Harbor Court having finished the Annapolis-to-Newport Race it is a tremendous feeling of accomplishment.”

Skippers will be told to expect inclement weather at some point during the voyage as it is not uncommon for the fleet to sail through varying fronts. Boats sometimes have to withdraw for various reasons so the seminar will address the best places to make port.

“Prospective skippers need to understand that they will not be in the middle of the ocean during this race. From start to finish, you are never really that far from land,” Myers said. “I think sometimes sailors believe a race of this nature is more difficult than it really is. There are no dragons out there, but you might see a mermaid.”

Half the battle with an offshore race involves properly prepping the boat and our panelists will review what is needed in terms of equipment. Race organizers require that every boat carry certain safety gear such as life rafts, flares and a medical kit so a thorough rundown of that checklist will be covered.

Willy Keyworth has been a professional with North Sails for more than two decades and has done the Annapolis-to-Newport Race at least 15 times, most often as watch captain aboard the maxi yacht Donnybrook. Keyworth, who has also competed many times in Newport-Bermuda and just about every other major ocean race on the East Coast can speak with authority about provisioning along with organizing a crew. It is critical for skippers to know the skills and capabilities of all onboard and organize watches in such a manner as to ensure there are experienced individuals on deck to oversee those with less time on the water.

Another notable panelist will be Mike Jones, an accomplished navigator and veteran of countless offshore passages. Jones, who grew up sailing on the Magothy River and Chesapeake Bay, has an extensive background in marine electronics and served as lead technician for the AmericaOne challenge for the America’s Cup. He also served as electronics manager for the BMW Oracle Racing campaign.

Jones, who has handled navigation for the extremely successful Sjambok racing program among others, has been a key member of winning teams for Annapolis-to-Newport, Newport-to-Bermuda and Montego Bay Race to new a few.

Jones will dispense his expertise with regard to plotting a course for the Annapolis-to-Newport Race. Having a routing plan going into the race and knowing how to adjust based on sea and weather conditions is absolutely critical for such a passage. Jones will talk about putting together a chart kit as well as utilizing radar, onboard computer and other navigational tools.

Garth Hichens, a longtime Annapolis Yacht Club member who is serving as Participation Chairman for the 2015 Annapolis-to-Newport Race, will also serve on the panel. Hichens, who grew up sailing out of the South African town of Durban that is known for its strong winds and rough seas, has more than 50,000 miles of ocean racing and cruising experience under his belt.

Hichens owned Annapolis Yacht Sales for 15 years and was responsible for selling, rigging and commissioning hundreds of new and used sailboats during that time. He is particularly familiar with the type of Racer-Cruiser designs that will compete in the new Performance Cruising Class for the 2015 Annapolis-to-Newport Race.

Boats manufactured by the likes of Beneteau, Jeanneau, Sabre, Swan, Tartan, C&C and J/Boats are ideal for sailing from Annapolis to Newport, although the owners may not realize it. A major thrust of the seminar will be aimed at helping racer-cruiser skippers understand that such an offshore passage is quite manageable provided all proper preparations and necessary precautions are taken.

“We are looking to increase participation within the Performance Cruising Class and many of those owners will be first-timers,” Hichens said. “This seminar will provide a broad outline about the Annapolis-to-Newport Race and give prospective competitors an opportunity to ask any questions they might have.”

The Annapolis-to-Newport Race seminar will be limited to 100 participants and only two sailors per boat. To reserve a spot, contact the Annapolis Yacht Club at 410-263-9279. For more details on the 2015 Annapolis-to-Newport Race or to enter, visit <http://annapolisnewportrace.com>

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