

# AYC hosts the Melges 32 East Coast Championship

On May 15, seven teams in the elite Melges 32 class took to the waters off AYC to contest the East Coast Championship. The first major Melges 32 event hosted in the region brought an impressive group of East Coast-based sailors to compete. AYC representative Ed Tillinghast and owner of the Melges 32 **Dark N' Stormy** spearheaded the effort to bring the regatta to AYC.

Jim Swartz (Edgartown, Mass.) on **Q** and his 10-Congressional Cup collective-tenure team comprised of Gavin Brady, Chris Larson, Jamie Gale, Ben Beer, Tim Klein, Sarah Callahan, and Alex Baittinger ultimately won the event. It was the first major win for Swartz in the Melges 32 Class. "This has been fantastic. It came down to the last race, and we had some interesting starts that got our blood pumping. But this team rose to the occasion." said Swartz. Second overall was Alex Jackson (Riverside, CT) on **Leenabarca** and third was John Taylor (Jupiter, Fla.) on **Ninkasi**. Ed Tillinghast finished sixth.

## Local Knowledge Helped Dark N' Stormy Get 2 Bullets

Conditions for the event provided a unique set of challenges to the fleet and the Race Committee (led by PRO Robin Wallace), contributing to the notoriously close racing that the class has become known for. Local knowledge proved useful for Ed Tillinghast's **Dark N' Stormy**, taking two bullets in the regatta, second only to Jim Swartz winning team on **Q**. However, a mere 7 points separated 2nd place from last with all boats in contention throughout the 9 race regatta.



*Clara Robertson on Argo*

Perhaps the most exciting part of the event for local youth sailors was the continuation of Take a Junior Sailing Day, which originated at the Melges 32 Training Regatta in Fort Lauderdale. Scott Florio coordinated the team pairing and organization for AYC, which is explained in the Junior Perspective article that follows.

For the final day of racing, the conditions did not disappoint. The competition was tight and eventful. Flat water, clearer visibility and



*Becca Quirke biking on Shakedown*

8-10 knots of breeze primed the fleet for the first start. Swartz lashed out at the fleet, right off the pin with speed, Taylor alongside. For most of the race, Swartz looked to have the win in the bag chased by Ed Tillinghast, Taylor, and Jason Carroll (New York, N.Y.) on **Argo** but on the last weather leg he simply went the wrong way pushing him back in the fleet. Instead Taylor challenged for the top spot three-wide into the mark with Tillinghast and Kip Meadows on **roXanne** right behind. At the offset, Taylor and Meadows had trouble with the sets, leaving Tillinghast to slide right by and take the lead on the last downwind run. Tillinghast went on to win, with Carroll slipping in to take second at the finish. Meadows accepted third.

With a course bearing of 350, 1.8nm and five legs, the last race saw continued breezy conditions and a big shift right at the start that stirred the fleet's intensity and aggression. Meadows was called over early again, Jackson on the other hand was boxed out at the committee end. Taylor got another leg-up on the fleet rounding the top mark in first just ahead of Swartz and Carroll. Downwind and through the gate, Taylor held the lead with Swartz right behind. Back upwind, around the mark, then through the final gate of the race, Swartz took the lead only moments ahead of Taylor, followed by Carroll, Tillinghast, and Pierini on **Shakedown**. Swartz hung on for the win and sealed the deal for the Championship title!

An event like this isn't possible without the dedicated efforts of a large group of volunteers. In addition to overall leadership from Glenn Morrison and Bill Sandberg, the American Yacht Club Race Committee did an excellent job, getting off nine races over the three day event. The RC was led by PRO Robin Wallace, with Barry Gold, Jim Callahan, Arthur Hanlon, Rob Alexander, Carol Smith, John and Katrina Hele, Paul LaBosiere, Cathy Furnary, Alan Borst, Jennifer Walker, Paul Cantwell, Laurie Morrison, and Jim Travis participating as well.

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Full results are available online on the American Yacht Club site at <http://www.americanyc.org>.

## Melges 32: The Juniors Perspective

When the Melges 32 East Coast Championships was awarded to American Yacht Club, the Class requested the Club adopt its' policy of having junior sailors participate as members of the teams on the second day of the regatta. This policy was adopted and each boat was required to carry a junior crew member on Saturday regardless of weight or size.

For those of you unfamiliar with a Melges 32, space is quite limited and weight is carefully managed. The fact that an extra person is permitted, let alone tolerated, is quite remarkable. The Melges 32 fleet is made up of the best sailors in the country, if not the world. Each boat is packed with professional, Olympic, America's Cup and Volvo Ocean racers. The individual programs are very well funded traveling from country to country to race against the best.

When the Club was asked to collect a group of experienced AYC junior sailors to participate in the event, we all questioned how inviting the teams would be and how enjoyable the event would be for the kids. Our concerns were quickly put to rest when the first junior to approach his ride was handed a full set of crew gear and asked to help set the rig for the day of racing. To say the teams were inviting is an understatement. They outwardly welcomed each junior and immediately welcomed him or her as a part of the team.

## Hiking out a Thrill

On board **Shakedown** was junior crew member Rebecca Quirk (13 years old). Rebecca commented, "The experience was very different to sailing my Pixel or 420. The day started out as a cold foggy, Long Island Sound morning, then cleared up to be an afternoon of wind, pure fun, and enjoyment for my peers and me. One thing I found to be very interesting was the contribution of women to the boat I was sailing on. There were women on many of the other boats in the class and their importance to the function of the boat was very evident. The two women aboard **Shakedown** were essential to the racing in both tactics and physical work. Their presence, along with the many others on board the boat, were inspirational to me as a junior sailor at AYC. While acting as a member of the highly experienced crew, my job was to sit behind the skipper and hike. The hiking was the part that really interested me, and after speaking to the other junior sailors, it interested them as well. It was really fascinating how all of the crew members could hike out for such a long period of time, and move in perfect unison with the

correct amount of weight, which I learned was an essential part of the downwind legs. Another thing that was remarkable to learn was the way the crew could jibe the spinnaker in such high winds. The way everything almost always ran so smoothly and easily was very cool to watch. From the exciting starts to the difficult downwind jibes, I really enjoyed the opportunity to be part of such an important race for the Melges 32 Class, and especially to be able to observe professional sailors in the best learning environment for this kind of lesson; the boat itself."

## One of My Best Days on the Water

Twelve-year-old Walter Florio crewed on board the winning boat **Q**, owned by Jim Swartz. "The Melges 32 junior sailors day was one of my best days on the water," Florio stated enthusiastically. "It was exciting to see all the action on the boat and no one made any mistakes, the hoists and takedowns were perfect. When the wind started to pick up I noticed how focused everyone was at doing their job. No one messed around and when the crew was hiking, they were always looking upwind for puffs and shifts as if their life depended on it. Also, everyone was very nice and they treated me as a team member and not just some kid going for a ride. I really felt as if I was part of the team and part of their winning effort."



*Charles Bocklet aboard Dark N'Stormy*

Similarly, Charles Bocklet (15 years old) sailed aboard Ed Tillinghast's **Dark N'Stormy** and said, "it's amazing how much faster these boats go than my 420 in just a little wind

and it was really cool driving in the pre-race warm-up and talking to all the team members including Stu McNay from the US Olympic Team."

Adding to the fun, the crews asked each junior sailor to join their team members at the regatta dinner. Additionally, each junior sailor was interviewed and appeared on the M32 blog. Special thanks needs to be extended to Joy Dunigan, the M32 Class Administrator, who put so much effort into making the day special and coordinated all the on-and-off water activities. Junior participants included Carter Kramer, Nick Philip, Charles Bocklet, Molly and Clara Robertson, Becca Quirke, and Walter Florio.

*Contributed by Ed Tillinghast, Justin Shaffer, and Scott Florio*