

There is nothing better than ending a successful MC sailing season than at the MC Blue Chip regatta on Spring Lake! The winds are typically 10 to 15 mph, the power boats go into hibernation and the lake offers plenty of opportunities to play the shoreline shifts and work your way through the fleet. This year, almost 30% of the eligible sailors made their way through the Friday thunderstorms in order to battle for the Blue Chip championship which comes with a lifetime invitation!

Day 1 - There was a nice 8 to 10 mph breeze from the NE which set-up perfectly for a nice wide starting area the first part of the race and a tighter bottleneck about 3/4 up the weather leg. There was a slight advantage at the pin end, but those who kept tacking back to the left shoreline about every 45 seconds were rewarded with nice lifts. The first pack of 10 boats rounded closely bunched together with plenty of jibbing back and forth along the same shoreline. Five-time champion Ted Keller, Ryan Grosch and Andy Molesta broke away from the fleet on the 2nd upwind leg and battled back and forth until Ted finally pulled ahead and won the first race and the new Founder's trophy. Race #2 wasn't much different except the starting line was altered slightly along with an occasion East shift that kept everyone looking for a shift away from the West shore. Another clean start and boats at both ends of the line were rewarded with clean air and able to pull out in front of a very tight fleet. Last year's Champion Mike Considine pulled ahead on the downwind leg while Ryan Grosch, Kyle Verplank, Eddie Cox and Clark Wade were battling hard to stay ahead of tightly packed second group. The finish time between 3rd and 10th place was about 20 seconds just to give you an idea of how intense the sailing was for this entire race. Race 3 after lunch, the breeze had dropped down to about 6 knots and everyone dropped crew. Spring Lake's Andy Molesta, who has been consistently near the top all morning, finally broke away from the field and won the 3rd race. Ryan Grosch and Chad Hough who were initialled buried at the start seemed to have an extra gear as they worked through the fleet and finished 2nd and 4th along with Eddie Cox who was 3rd. Race 4, the wind shifted to the North and the race committee took the fleet up the lake to an area that had points off both shoreline lines and had the fleet splitting up and working both shorelines. Plenty of lead changes throughout this race but patience and ability to get in front of the pressure helped Ted Keller win his second race followed by Eddie Cox and Chad Hough who climbed back by taking a few risks along the Eastern shore. Leaders after Day 1 were: 1. Ryan Grosch, 2. Eddie Cox, 3. Andy Molesta 4. Mike Considine 5. Ted Keller

Saturday after the races there was the famous Spring Lake Lean-In where members of the club bring down plates of appetizers and get to hear the embellished on the water stories from the sailors. The traditional blue sport coat dinner at the Arboreal Inn that evening will never be forgotten. Scott Harestad was the emcee and he lined up a host of speakers and past champions to honor the Founders of the Blue Chip regatta Carl Reuderdahl and Happy Fox. Charlie Harrett shared some memories of his days with Melges Boat Works, Happy, Carl and Frytag (Smiley), Mike Keenan announced our mystery guest Bruce Moore, who has a long history in the scow fleets. Bruce shared some amazing sailing stories, many from his days alongside Buddy Melges. Glen Walborn and Brien Fox, past Blue Chip regatta chairman, had everyone laughing about their stories of Happy Fox and the early days of this regatta. The night ended by surprising Happy Fox with the Founders Trophy (winner of the first race) which was won by Ted Keller. Happy Fox then enlightened the crowd with an impromptu and passionate conversation about his history in the MC class and the importance of teaching, sharing and growing our fleet.

Day 2 - Following a warm hot breakfast of pancakes, eggs and bacon; 19 of the 26 competitors threw on their foul weather gear and headed out to do battle in 15 - 20 mph from the ENE direction. The race committee did a great job utilizing the widest body of water and we had a challenging course that again allowed for risk vs reward challenges and some gusts pushing the 23 knot limits. Those who took crew definitely had the advantage as Eddie and Ryan separated themselves from the tight fleet in a battle for first place overall. Eddie finally got his first Blue Chip bullet with Ryan a close second followed by Chad Hough, Ted Keller and Andy Molesta. Race 6 provided our first general recall as everyone was fighting hard for the coveted top 5 places and automatic invitation next year. Scott Harestad, sailing single handed ran down and took the pin end start along with Eddie Cox, while most of the fleet was battling in the middle of the line. Eddie Cox rounded in first followed by Scott Harestad and Ted Keller. Ryan Grosch discovered how tough the fleet can be when you get caught up in the pack and was unable to gain ground on the leaders. Eddie Cox played it fairly conservative as Ted Keller and Scott Harestad gained ground on the 2nd downwind leg, but there was no chance to catch our Blue Chip champion

upwind in a steady 20 knot breeze; Ted Keller finished in 2nd place followed closely by Scott Harestad, Andy Molesta and Mark Beaton from NJ, who definitely felt at home in this weather as he took a 5th and 6th on the day.

Congratulations to our new MC Blue Chip Champion Eddie Cox! He sailed a consistent regatta that not only tested his patience but also embraced and rewarded him for his boat handling skills. Many thanks to Steve Schiiler and his stellar race committee, all the SLYC volunteers and those who provided free lodging. Many thanks to Happy Fox and Carl Reuterdaahl for being Founders of this regatta and stewards of our class, we will carry on your legacy to our future sailors.

Scott Harestad