

Compass Points

Highly Unofficial Version - May 2009

Martin Lorch Scores Big Win in 2009 Champ Race

Words by Mike Ferring

Photos by Chrisann Tortora

It didn't start well. At the gun we were at full speed and on time when suddenly confronted with Rick Johnson sideways and stopped on the line. By the time Rick stumbled out of the way, the fleet was flying to the windward mark.

We pedaled to the big pinwheel of boats trying to turn left around the mark, finding Steve Brown sitting sideways and stopped in the light air. This called for some creativity in Rule 18 interpretation, so we pushed Steve's bow around the mark and we all headed downwind at the back of the pack and an ignominious 10th out of 11. Not the only time, as it turned out.

The 2009 AYC Championship Runoffs were a grueling marathon of 11 races with 11 boats in five hours in 103-degree sun in the swirling breeze of Tempe Town Lake. They featured the fleet champions: many of the best sailors in the club, including seven-time champ Skip Kempff, two-time reigning champ Mike Hester, plus former champs Dennis Martinelli and Martin Lorch.

The day began with a lot of shouting, pushing, and protests. Martin tried to luff a gaggle of us at the start line, backing off when I pointed out he'd passed head to wind. On one mark rounding Mike Hester even whipped out a red flag. But I noticed a real shift in tone as the day went on and people seemed to get along better. Maybe they'd just gotten tired.

Our second 10th place finish was all on us. This time we hit the start line on time and on speed with open air and open water. And this time crewman Neil Thibodaux said, "We're over early." Calmly, he said it. Couldn't be, I said (maybe not in those words). Neil is usually right about this stuff, so I flipped a turn and headed back to the start, watching everyone disappear into the distance. On the way back to the dock, I asked the RC. Nope, we weren't over early.



Champ Martin Lorch (right) and crew George Tingom. Martin also won the trophy in 1988 and 1990.

I wasn't keeping score to know who was doing well, but I noticed that Skip and Mike had some bad races. Someone mentioned that Martin and his TTL local-expert crewman George Tingom were doing well and it turned out they were. Even after Mike Hester went hunting for him in the last race, Martin outscored the other ten of us and took his third Club Championship (his first came 21 years ago in 1988; the second in 1990).

Me? Mid-pack, which was my goal. Sixth. But I had a huge amount of fun doing it. It was a great kick to be on the water with this bunch in equal boats. In one race I crossed the finish within a second of Mike Hester and Skip Kempff. Beep, beep, beep. Okay, so I was the last beep when I should have been the first (another TTL wind shift), but it was a thrill just to cross in such company.

We pulled the boats and headed for the barbeque on the "grassy knoll" to hash it over. Exhausted. Smiling. Big smiles.



Our intrepid reporter Mike Ferring with crew Neil Thibodaux, non-spin fleet champs.

David Rawstrom Named AYC Sportsmanship Trophy Winner

By Mike Ferring

It's hard to think of David Rawstrom without smiling. His take-it-as-it-comes approach is easy to take and easy to like. Think of the time a few years ago when David sailed his Bucc to the Tall Cactus regatta, and then went for a swim, floating his big body along on Humbug Creek on top of a small, pink, inflatable lobster.

Think of David at Tempe Town Lake, lounging in a lawn chair with a sun umbrella, popping off race starts using a pump-up horn based on a plastic, two-liter Mountain Dew bottle.

Think of him bobbing in his Bucc in the summer heat, terrorizing competitors with a water cannon. Remember when he came up with the perfect trophy for summer racing? A frying pan with a plastic fried egg inside.

But we don't pick recipients of the AYC Sportsmanship Award just because they're good company and good sports. We pick them because they've been such valuable members of the club. Commodore Mike Parker described the person as a "Most Valuable Player"—an MVP—and no one can doubt that David has been extremely valuable to AYC.

He owned one of the first Buccaneers in the club and when he and Pat Blumm and Emory Heisler set out to build a Bucc fleet, they did it with a vengeance, creating one of the biggest fleets in the club. Sure, the Bucc is a good boat, but mostly people wanted to sail with those guys. They made it AYC's "fun" fleet and it still is today.

Our successful TTL racing program owes its very existence to David Rawstrom. When he thought we should be racing at TTL, David didn't wait for someone else to do it. He invited people to come by, set up his lawn chair by the edge of the water and ran races—not just once or twice, but for every race for every race weekend for years. He got the TTL baby to crawl, walk, squawk and sail on its own. He gave up sailing himself in order to open up sailing for others and we're still benefitting from his push start.

When the club needed to fill one of its most intense jobs, fleet captain, David stepped up and did it for three extraordinary years. You could find him cleaning the bottom of the TTL boat or putting together a work party for Lake Pleasant. And when the board decided it was time to retire the old Lake Pleasant committee boat, David is the guy who arranged the build and commissioned a new glorious one, built right, right down to his "Ollie," the wonderful automatic start sequencer.

So David, for all that you are and all that you've done for the Arizona Yacht Club, we proudly present you with the 2009 Sportsmanship Award with our grateful thanks.



Sportsmanship Award winner David Rawstrom with the iconic Dew Horn. Photo: Chrisann Tortora