

Bob Merrick's

Hobie 16 North Americans



The 2004 Hobie 16 North American Championship was held on Lake Oneida in Syracuse, New York from September 10th to the 17th. The booming Hobie fleet 204 hosted the event. They do a fantastic job hosting the Northeast Area Hobie Championship every year – also known as the “Madcatter” – and they really kicked it up a notch for the NAs. Party-ing with fleet 204 is hard to beat, and there were plenty of parties to supplement the great racing during the day.

The event started on Friday with a three-day championship for the Hobie 16 Women, Hobie 16 Youth, and Hobie 14 Sailors. Friday morning brought little wind and an onshore postponement before race one. This proved to be a preview of the week ahead.

Youth sailing in the Hobie 16 class has been growing over the last few years, and 17 youth teams made it to the event this year. That number was up from 10 teams last year. Local sailors Michael Siau and Trey James took this year's Youth title.

Defending champions from Puerto Rico, Rosarito Martinez and Kamil Berrios, won the Hobie 16 Women's Championship. The Hobie 14 NAs was won by Bill Jeffers.

Monday was Day One of the Open Championships. With 71 registered boats the fleet would be split into Gold and Silver groups on the last two days of racing. Prior to that the teams would be divided into four groups who would each compete against each other in a round-robin format for the first three days.

The regatta started with three light-air races. Mexicans Armando Noriega and Roderigo Achach got off to an early lead and were tied for first with 11 points. Tuesday brought the only nice breeze of the Open event topping out at about 15 knots. The race committee made good use of the breeze and held five races for each group. At the end of Day Two of the regatta Noriega and Achach had already built a huge lead by winning four of the five races on that day.

The light air was back for Day Three and only one more race was completed before the fleet was split into Gold and Silver groups.

That night was the “Cut Party” where the sailors making it into the Gold fleet were announced. The Puerto Rican team proved, as they always do, to be fantastic guests and helped to host the party with



a seemingly endless supply of Don Q Rum served from a bar made out of an old Hobie 16 hull. The top 40 teams advanced to the Gold fleet and the remaining teams raced for the Silver fleet title.

The Silver fleet started out with new scores for the last two days of racing: they were given their place to date as their first Silver fleet score. Pat Caster and Rakel Holmes won the Silver fleet after seven races.

In the Gold fleet Noriega and Achach remained consistent and ended the regatta 22 points ahead of the 2004 Alter Cup champions Mike Montague and Cathy Ward. This is the first North American Championship title for Noriega and Achach, and they let their excitement show when they were presented with their awards on Friday night.

The 2005 Hobie 16 North Americans will be held in Ventura, California. Next year's championship will

mark the class' return to a supplied-boat format. The Hobie Cat Company has offered the Hobie Class of North America 35 new Hobie 16s, free of charge, for the 2005 regatta and a commitment to do the same in future years. This is an unparalleled show of support by a class manufacturer. Seventy teams of Hobie 16 sailors will qualify for the 2005 NAs through their regional points regattas. See you on the water.

Top 5 finishers (71 boats)

Armando Noriega and Roderigo Achach (MEX)
Mike Montague and Cathy Ward (CA)
Bob Merrick and Eliza Cleveland (CT)
Paul Hess and Mary Ann Hess (CA)
Wall Myers and Tyler Myers (NJ)

For complete results and pictures visit
<http://www.hobienac.com> **MM**