

CARLTON TUCKER • HOBBIE FLEET 178, MARY ESTHER, FLORIDA, DIVISION 8, NAHCA SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR - 1998

Of the many sailors and racers who may, in one way or another, fit the description of the ideal Hobbie Sports-person, it was Carlton Tucker who consistently personified the term in ways everyone can understand. Knowing him personally, or interacting with him at racing or sailing events, it was impossible to miss his positive attitude. His humility, kindness, generosity and down-to-earth approach were witness to his commitment to the Hobbie Way of Life.

In this year of his untimely death it is appropriate that his name be honored as the 1998 Hobbie Catamaran Sports-person of the Year.

He was a "seat-of-the-pants" sailor. He didn't know or care much about high-tech stuff, and he didn't have any special rigging tricks. How many sailors must have checked out his boat before a race to see if he had

any secrets or a special way of setting it up that allowed him to sail so fast? Of course, he didn't. But, he did have an edge because he could feel the boat as though he were a part of it and he made sure that he passed the feeling along to others as best he could. He set a high standard of competitiveness and friendship that will live on forever.

He gave impromptu racing clinics whenever the wind died and everyone was hanging out under the committee tent. Countless times, he was guest expert at Rick White's sailing clinics and at local regattas. Just ask and Carlton would answer any question: how to rake a mast, how to get a better start, how to make a better mark rounding. He'd share his best sailing tactics, latest boat tuning tips and how to cook a delicious meal.

When giving seminars, Carlton's

excitement, enthusiasm, zeal and love for the sport infected everyone with energy. He cared about people and was sensitive to their feelings; honing their skills, he was often frustrated with himself. He wanted to call everyone by name, no easy task when there are 15 or 20 boats and two people on most. But, predictably, the next day he knew everyone as though each was an old friend. Just offer Carlton a plane ticket, and he would be there, helping to promote sailing in any backyard across the states, in the middle of winter and in inches of snow.

Emulating Carlton was for many, more than understanding how to race or sail well. Carlton "lived" by enjoying life and sharing the camaraderie among sailors — on or off the water. Although he was serious about his sailboat racing, he never took it too

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seriously. Good sportsmanship and doing the right thing on the water had a higher priority than winning. Carlton was as gracious in victory as he was in defeat. Regardless of how the overall finishes came out, he always had fun. He gave his all in each race from start to finish. Carlton epitomized the famous saying, "... fierce competition among friends". Whether racing or day-sailing, he was a champion sharing his joy along with his secrets . . . and in a way that helped you feel good about yourself.

Carlton Tucker sailed in San Francisco, CA in 1987 at the Hobie 16 Nationals. He sailed in Toronto, Canada in 1989 at the Hobie 17 Worlds; in Wildwood, NJ in 1993 at the Hobie 16 Nationals; in Kiawa Island, SC in 1993 at the Hobie 20 Nationals; in La Rochelle, France in

1994 at the IYRU World Sailing Championships; in St. Joe's, MI in 1994 at the Hobie 20 Nationals; in Hualtulco, MX in 1995 at the Hobie 16 Worlds; in Daytona Beach, FL in 1995 at the Hobie 16 Nationals; in Dubai, UAE in 1996 at the Hobie 16 Worlds; and he sailed in Ft. Walton Beach, his home.

Restless in spirit, he was always organizing some sort of extracurricular activity involving as many people as he could. He was a fierce water-walker and paddle racer at Lake Havasu. Anywhere Carlton shared his time, he was the ultimate story teller and entertainer. Perhaps it was in La Rochelle sitting around the compound waiting for the wind when Carlton began the telling of his latest adventure. "Hunting turkeys," he explained, "requires the finesse and skill to trick or entice the male

turkey into coming out of hiding." The tale magically came to life as Carlton demonstrated the seductive female call he'd used to fool "Tom" into believing Carl-ton himself was desirous of "Tom's" affections.

On the road trip back from the Todos Santos Regatta, Carlton provided the pre-dinner entertainment by pitting himself against the local's best salsas. Eager to accommodate, he downed the "hottest stuff Mexico had to offer" (compliments of the chef). Carlton turned beet red, inhaled ten big glasses of water, expected his top to blow off (as did everyone else), and he enjoyed every minute of it.

Over the 25+ year relationship Carlton had with sailing, he won nine national championships on seven different boats: the Hobie 14, Hobie 18, Nacra 5.2, Prindle 19,

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Hobie 21, Hobie 20, and the Stiletto 23. He also won the Alter Cup Championship three times and was proud of a third place finish at the 1988 Tornado Nationals. At the world level, he finished 3rd in the 1988 Hobie 17 Worlds, and placed 2nd in that event in 1990. He finished 5th in the 1986 Hobie 16 Worlds and was three times runner-up at the Hobie 18 Worlds. Carlton Tucker excelled at distance races as well. He was a four-time participant in the Worrell 1000, finishing 5th, 2nd, 1st, and 3rd. He won the Raid Mer de Chine 500-mile Race on the China Sea in the Philippines, and twice finished 3rd in the Hog's Breath 1000, and placed 2nd in the 1990 Tahiti Cat Challenge. Carlton

was one of the first 10 sailors inducted into the Catamaran Sailing Hall of Fame, which was established in 1997.

Besides being a great sailor and one of the few who was always a threat to win (his sailing record speaks for itself), Carlton always made people feel good when meeting again at the next regatta. And when it was all over, everyone went out for a drink, some laughs and then waited for the next time. He had a gift for making everyone around him feel welcome and special whether it was traveling on a plane, sailing at a race or entertaining visitors at his favorite place on earth, Ft. Walton Beach, Florida.

On the water Carlton was the one to watch; he was supposed to be one

of those sailors who would still be racing with us into his '70s. He was the sailor so many relished following to the finish line. One minute he'd be sailing right beside you pushing his boat so hard it would flip. Then, around the next mark, there he was, right beside you again!

Our sport has lost an ocean-going pioneer with the passing of Carlton Tucker . . . .

*Carlton, you will be missed.*