

# Bull Session

News and comment for the El Toro Class

October #432

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## CORKSCREW SLOUGH

"El Toro Whitbread or the El Toro Vendee Globe Cork Screw Race"

A mixed fleet of 20 very experienced and new El Toro sailors ventured out of Redwood City to conquer the Cork Screw Slough. The wind was strong but quite manageable when the fleet lined up, started and headed for Mark 20, still in the main ship channel.

This course goes through three different twisting and turning sloughs and channels around the Redwood City offshore islands. But one is straight. By the time the fleet entered the straight one, just past Pete's Harbor, the wind made a world class appearance.

This almost straight up-wind channel has no protection or edge relief from the wind blowing straight down in the high teens. Sailors started realizing they were sailing in winds that demanded a very high level of skill. Two boats turned around almost immediately. By the time the fleet was half way up this leg 4 boats turned for home. There was a little relief for the lead boats when they exited and reached toward the first turning mark. But more excitement awaited the fleet when they re-entered the top of this channel on the return running leg.

4 boats learned what it was like to "do an Oracle", bow stuffing crash. Almost all the boats experienced a 'spin-out'. At this point it turned into carnage because the wind was in the high 20's.

After two + hours of survival sailing half of the fleet finished. Art and John were planning all the way down the long straight channel. All of this in shifty, puffy winds while racing against the current. Early leaders were John Pacholski and Chris Straub but it was Art Lange who completed the last jibe,,the one John 'spun-out' during. Art took the win,,by one jibe.

The Whitbread Around the World Race has seen attrition rates in the 50 percent and the Vendee Globe has had 75 percent of the fleet skater into different ports all over the world. So, 50 percent is not too bad.

Problems included not getting the body weight far enough aft, water getting into the flotation tanks and boom vang not strong enough to keep the sail from twisting off so dramatically thus unbalancing the rig.

These are the conditions that we do not go out and practice in or sail in very often.

Larry Mayne, race committee and crash boat driver, is the real hero of the Sequoia Yacht Club. After righting one boat, he anchored it. Rescued two more and still placed a red flag on the last turning mark. He gathered up all four remaining boats and towed them to Pete's Harbor dock, re-organized and then got them all back to the launching area. The real important fact was that each sailor was able to help right their own boat and then help the next boat to a safe condition.

If the Corkscrew Slough had been open and the fleet where able to traverse through the mostly broad reaching channels it would have been a very different day.

It would have been easier for the fleet to deal with the higher winds. But an earth dam across the slough make the zig-zag course impossible so the course home had the fleet return straight down the windy channel.

Each finishing boat won the race by surviving winds and skinny channels that makes Hawaii's Kaneohe Bay look tame. This was a good practice race for the Hawaii Nationals, being held there in August, 2013. Kaneohe is an open bay with steady "trade winds" in the mid teens. Oh, and the water is warm and the wind is really warm! Sailing in Hawaii is the same as sailing in Paradise!

Results to follow.

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Now is the time to start planning to get to Hawaii for the Nationals. The first planning meeting for the event has happened. I have my plane tickets in hand. It has been 10 years since we raced in Hawaii. It could be 10 years or more before we can get back to Hawaii. So, this may be your only possibility,,,for a while,,,and it does not get as windy as Corkscrew.

## Hawaii 2013

The dates for Hawaii have been approved. The week of August 3, Saturday to August 11, Sunday is the week for the 2013 Hawaii North American Championship Series and family vacation.

Senior and Junior

Sunday and Monday are personal practice days, Racing August 6-7-8, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, pack-up boats and trophies Friday evening. More later.

**2012** start of winter

Mid-Winter Series Richmond Yacht Club December 2 Sunday  
Mid-Winter Series Lake Merrit Sailing Club December 8 Saturday

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2012 Northern California El Toro Master Series has been won by,,,Art Lange.