

Bull Session

News and comment for the El Toro Class

June #343

www.eltoroyra.org

Indeed I have returned from sailing a cat rigged ocean racer from San Fransisco to Hawaii. The Tom Wylie designed 30' Cat and the olympic Finn have more incommon than an with an El Toro. The Wylie Cat requires 'driving' it with more power but it is a little bit forgiving if your placement on the Pacific Ocean swell is not exactly correct. It does respond with good boat speed when steered well. An El Toro is twitchyer, less forgiving and lighter on the helm. With an El Toro there is no room for error when going dead down wind when the wind is blowing hard. However it is posible to sail the Wylie dead down wind in 30 wind speed but it will jib without giving warning. Alarming because the sail is so very big.

We sailed a "great circle" route, well north of the traditional southern course. This was where the most wind was. We actualy sailed 2072 miles for the 2070 ocean course. Being north we had very little sun. Almost no moon or stars and an overcast thick enough to have the mast head light be only a smudge of color. It took 13 1/2 days. We finished at night on Sunday July18th after the July 5th start.

The same racing strategy learned in the El Toro translates to ocean racing. There is the same requirement to know where the rest of the fleet is. To know where you are on the race course and who to cover. It is easy to loose big in the ocean and it is easy to gain a hundred miles on your fleet if you are smart. All the little tricks that are used in short races can lead to big gains in long distance races.

Envision sailing an El Toro dead down wind in a real big blow, sometimes surfing and some times planning. Do it in the dark, so dark the bow is hard to see. All dressed up in cold complete fowl weather gear that you have not taken off for 6 days. Moving around inside the cabin was best done on ones knees. Sleeping is done for about 45 minutes because my steering time started on the hour every other hour. Hard fought racing,,but we won our class.

Pinecrest

The NOR for the El Toro Worlds at Pinecrest Lake have just been posted on the ETIYRA website. Sailing at Pinecrest is special every day, but when we flat landers join the mountain folks for the Worlds it's even better. The lake is pristine. Surrounded by pine trees with a backdrop of granite peaks, it's the prettiest venue on the Toro racing schedule. You will likely see Osprey diving for fish as you race along. Winds are VERY interesting and range from very light to 15 knot puffs to keep you on your toes. This is more than just a Toro race, it's a chunk of Toro folklore. The local yacht club, the SOB's (Still On the Beach), have been racing every day at 2pm from the 4th of July to Labor Day for many, many years. The marks are spread around the lake and named by features on the lake (stump, cove, tower.) Trust me the racing is quite competitive but

the locals set the rules and they are delightfully looser than the official "Racing Rules." Brushing marks is almost encouraged to enhance competition. If you accidentally bump someone, a quick courtesy apology is all that's required. No circles need be turned in either case. Two races are schedule for Saturday and one for Sunday. After the racing Saturday there's a pot luck down near the boats for everyone to visit and swap stories on the day of racing. I understand that the trophies for this year's 1st through 6th finishers will be memorable.

The event is held lakeside at the end of the footpath that leads down to the lake from the intersection of Lakeshore Drive and Sugarpine Road. Sign-up is around 11am on Saturday, skippers meeting is at noon. There is a modest regatta fee of \$5 to cover trophies with the surplus being donated to race mark maintenance. Parking after 9:30am on the weekend can get tough, so best to arrive early, grab a space and spend some quality time at the lake. As far as required skill level for juniors, I would recommend Advanced and accomplished Intermediate sailors only for the mid-day racing, but there's no reason why beginners could not begin exploring this beautiful lake in their Toro's when the winds are light in the morning and late afternoon. Note that this is a mountain lake so the water is quite chilly. There are no safety boats present for this rather informal regatta – each skipper should be able to right his/her own boat in a capsized.

Camping is available on a first come, first serve basis (no reservations taken) at the Meadowview campground on Dodge Ridge Road about a mile from the lake. I'm told that if you get there Thursday you stand a very good chance of getting a great place to pitch your tent for the weekend. The Pinecrest Lodge and Campground is typically booked solid this time of year, but you might try stopping by on your way into the lake – they often have last minute cancellations on choice rooms and camp sites. Pinecrest is roughly three hours east of the Bay Area on Highway 108.

Hope to see all of you at Pinecrest this year. John P.

2010 schedule

Pinecrest Worlds

August 7-8

Totally Dinghy RYC

September 25-26

El Toro Stampede

October 3

Cork Screw Redwood City

October 9

Running of the Bulls

November 14 Elkhorn YC