

New Castle Sailing Club

NEWSLETTER

PO Box 46, New Castle, DE 19720

(302) 307-3060

Editor: Ernest Russell

Commodore's Corner

We have entered July and wow; the sailing has been great! I hope you all are getting out on the water. I am pleased to see sailors out on the water AND following the Club COVID-19

Procedures—wearing masks riverside and in boats with non-household members, keeping occupants in the sail house to 1

(mostly—reminding is needed sometimes there), etc. Our instructional needs are being met by our awesome volunteer instructors, mentors are connecting with new and unkeyed returning members, and even a shortened Racing season is planned to kick-off soon. Life as a sailor has been good!

Life hasn't been all a bowl of cherries though. As you remember to be safe with COVID-19, don't forget about the safety basics of sailing. We had one incident on the water recently that was entirely avoidable. The contributing factors were many and the sailor involved has written a piece in this month's newsletter, but consider this: we are all



especially prone to distractedness—in our haste to get out and sail after being cooped up at home with the COVID-19 nightmare and dealing with the hustle and bustle of work and family cares. Remember to take two and think about what you are doing when you do sail. If winds are low, stay close to the moorings and do not attempt monumental sails. Winds often drop off as the sun sets. Pay attention to tide changes. Listen to others, and be your brother's/sister's keeper. The most recent incident resulted in an experienced sailor ending up far away from the moorings, by herself and after sunset. Rescue by the Fire Company was required due to the precariousness of the boat's anchored position. That involved 2 fire companies and a state police helicopter. This was an enormous amount of resources and the lives of the rescuers were potentially put at risk—the current was strong where the boat was anchored around the ice breakers and it was after dark. It is a good thing we have such great resources to help get us out of a tight spot BUT—let's not get in the tight spot in the first place. And let's not forget that we are part of a community and our actions reflect our Club back to the Community. So, think twice about taking risks and pushing the limits on the water, especially during fun sails, where a committee boat and many other sailors aren't around to assist. Have fun safely.

One last thing—we have had a few incidents over the years that have required Board review and in some cases the Board has felt necessary to sanction the sailors. **Without exception, all incidents involved experienced sailors.** If you read this piece and thought it couldn't be you because you're such a good sailor who's been around the block, probabilities suggest you're going to be the next Incident.

Steve Constable
Commodore
New Castle Sailing Club

Do as I Say, Not as I Do

We've all heard that, and probably said it. I was reminded one and a half weeks ago why I advise members to take a clockwise route when rounding Pea Patch Island. I had asked my daughter to make alternate childcare arrangements, and mentioned on "Bob's List" that I would like to sail. I got several chores completed, and took longer going through my sailing gear to set up for the season than I expected. I thought I had a sailing partner, but I had waited too long, and that individual had made other plans with another member. It would have been easy to stay at home, but I went to the sail house, hoping to meet both of them and desperate to sail. I talked with a member who had been sailing and was about to head home. The last boat out moored, and I took their dinghy and their Scot. I allowed my need to escape to cloud my judgement, and sailed alone, although it was my first sail of the season. The tide was incoming, and wind blew from the northwest at about 8 knots. I thought that I had gotten too late a start to round Pea Patch, so I decided to sail to the power lines and back. The wind held, and the sun was still well above the horizon, so I chose to continue to the entrance to the Delaware City Canal. There were no other boats out, so this was another lapse in judgement. There was a bit of commercial traffic—all on the other side of the jetty and/or island, or headed away from me. There were 2 tankers at the Marathon Refinery dock, and I kept watch for smoke, and listened for any indication that they were about to leave. I thought that I was being attentive to the things that mattered. The river is shallow off Delaware City, and I was careful to avoid grounding. I checked the sun, and wind speed again when I was preparing to round the red buoy between Delaware City and the foot of Pea Patch.



It seemed at that point that it would take as long to return whether I rounded the island or retraced my route, so I decided to round, minimizing the potential effect if the wind decreased. After rounding the downstream tip of the island, I saw a Club boat. As I crossed the channel and approached Finn's Point, I watched over the point for superstructure, in case there was outgoing commercial traffic. During that leg, I saw another Club boat. When I passed the end jetty marker (Labeled Dike, but I've called it a jetty for decades and will continue to do so.) the wind was starting to diminish and the tidal current was not. I was being stubborn. I had jibed once near the red buoy, but only needed to trim my sails since then. I should have tacked while I still had plenty of wind, fought the current, then headed for the moorings.

Instead, I tried to sail the mark, not the wind. I did not recognize how much I was being swept, and still thought I could make my mooring if I got out of the worst of the current. One of the other boats returned to its mooring about the time I was half way between the end of the jetty and New Castle. I should have thought more about the wind direction and accepted the fact that it was going to diminish as I headed to shore. The second Club boat reached their mooring about the time I reached the first ice breaker (Labeled ice fender on charts, but I've always called them ice breakers). I hoped that I could pass between breakers and then tack, avoiding the worst of the current. The wind had diminished too much, so I tried to sail back out to where there was more wind, but did not have enough wind to get there. At this point, I was passing the second ice breaker, and went forward to free the anchor and rode. I dropped anchor and it caught offshore from the fourth breaker. So near, and yet so far. I was unable to see the moorings past the breakers, but was sure one or both crews had seen me. I pulled the rudder and took stock of my situation. I heard sirens and smelled smoke from onshore, so I was not sure whether the sirens were for me or for the fire, wherever it was. I pulled out my phone and looked toward the moorings again. There were flashing lights near the sail house, and a vehicle with flashing lights headed for the ramp. I dropped the main and started to stow gear, in preparation for being towed. The sun was approaching the horizon when Goodwill FC's boat approached. I pulled the centerboard and secured it. One of their crew came aboard, they secured the boats together and started to tow. The current around the breakers is turbulent, and they had trouble, so they tied the Scot alongside their boat for the rest of the ride. The trip to the mooring seemed to take forever, because their boat was fighting current, but the farther we got from the turbulence near the breakers, the easier and faster the ride became. They took me to my mooring and I secured both painters. If I'm not mistaken, it was Ed Ryan who rowed out and helped put the boat to bed. Onshore, there were two other members, who helped with the dinghies when we arrived onshore. I forgot my manners and forgot to introduce myself. Thank you all!

I should probably not have soloed on my first sail of the season, and not when there weren't other Club boats around. We really do keep an eye on each other, and try to make sure others are safe. I was too stubborn to stay home, return home when there was no one else with whom to sail, and kept setting goals further and further from the Club, despite the fact that the area from Hamburg Cove around Pea Patch to the end of the jetty has few people onshore who might see a boat in trouble. I am sorry that I put a boat in harm's way and needed help to return. Goodwill is the only rescue boat I saw, but apparently Holloway Terrace responded as well. I heard a helicopter overhead, which was apparently a Delaware State Police copter, which had also responded. My actions tied up three emergency crews, at expense to three agencies, and worried numerous members. Thank you for your concern. I am sorry my judgements and actions caused this.

When I joined the Club, we were advised to donate a case of beer to Goodwill FC if we needed to be towed or rescued. A more recent Board of Directors has noted how foolish that is and the Board now requests that monetary donations be made. I have a vivid memory of firefighters in Philadelphia, doing their jobs in scorching heat, with water bottles littering the ground around them. In addition to monetary donations, I will donate a case of water. The crews can drink water before, during, and after they are called to an emergency, and can offer it to someone they are helping when it is appropriate. That cannot happen with beer. I doubt they would turn down something home-baked, in addition to the monetary donation, if you need help and are so-inclined.

For now, I must sail with at least one other keyed member aboard. I will wear a mask, my PFD, and sailing gloves, and keep as much physical distance onboard as feasible. I look forward to seeing you on the water, and hope you will take precautions and avoid pitfalls and arrogance. Sail Safe!

Dotti Brabson

From the Fleet

More than half the fleet has been launched, and it's fantastic to see so many sailors responsibly enjoying the river this season. Please continue to be careful and observe social distancing when in the sailhouse (one person at a time) and when rowing out and sailing—wear your masks and gloves whenever possible.



Ensure that you are signing in and out of the log book appropriately; it's an important way to keep track of where you are in the event that we need to provide assistance getting back to shore.

NEW THIS YEAR: *each boat crew is required to have a charged, working cell phone aboard at all times.* Please also list that phone number in the notes page of the log book.

Also—the dreaded terns (nesting gulls) are back with a vengeance. We have stored reflective tape and clips in the barn; please ensure that each boat has at least two (preferably three) streamers of reflecting tape attached to the side stays. If you are on a Thistle, attach tape to the back grid—for the Scots, attach to the boom crutch or the stern handle. Clips and tape are located in the sailhouse. We will all be responsible for clean-up—so if you're going out, please also grab a bucket, brush and gloves from the sailhouse and make sure you give your boat a good scrub before sailing.

To close, I am going to plunder a page out of every good pirate's favorite advertising slogan from Captain Morgan: Have Fun, Responsibly—check the tide and current charts before you leave, consult your weather apps so that you know ahead of time what's coming at you, engage in conversations with other sailors onshore so that other boats also are aware of your sailing plans for your outing.

Looking forward to seeing you out on the water!

Meg Farrugia
Fleet Captain

Racing

Practice Race - Saturday Morning, July 25th.

With the launch of Red Stripe and Green on July 18th, we will have five Thistles in the water—enough to try a practice race. If there is sufficient interest, we will have a practice race on Saturday, July 25th at 10:00 a.m. The last race will begin by 1:30 p.m. so we will be back on land around 2:00 p.m. For this Practice Race, all skippers and crew must sign up in advance.



If you would like to either skipper or crew in the July 25th Practice Race, send me an email at: racingncsc@gmail.com. I will match interested skippers with interested crew. The five thistles (Red, Red Stripe, Green, Gold, and Gray) will be assigned on a first come-first served basis. If you would like to serve on the Race Committee, please sign up on the [Race Committee Sign-Up Sheet](#).

Tom Gorman
Racing Director

Membership

Please welcome our newest members, Chet Hadley, wife Yvette, and his four children. His son Elijah also plans to be an active sailor. Chet has experience sailing catamarans, and has already been out on the water several times.

John Harder
Membership Director

Property

You may recall the storm we had months ago that ended up damaging the shingles on our Club House, Garage and Dinghy Shed. Well, our insurance carrier agreed that repair was covered under our policy. The damage was so extensive that new roofs are required. So before summer's end you can all look forward to totally spruced up roofs for all three structures, and we're getting this work done for about the price of our policy deductible! Sometimes winds can be capricious but this time they were generous.

I'm sure too that you've all been dazzled by the new paint job on our dinghy house roof down at the river. You can thank none other than Ed Ryan, our painter emeritus! Way to go Ed—this paint not only improves the appearance but also protects the concrete from water intrusion, our long term worry for land structures. Also, thanks to Nancy Peffer and others for terrific weeding!



Lastly, as you leave the Club House, Barn, dinghy house, sail house, etc., don't forget to lock up after yourself. We still find doors unlocked on occasion.

