



Measuring Success at The Clagett

NEWPORT, R.I. (August 24, 2009) – Rhode Island’s public sailing center, Sail Newport, buzzed with activity today as sailors with disabilities and vision impairment gathered for the seventh annual C. Thomas Clagett Jr. Memorial Clinic and Regatta. When Judy McLennan (Portsmouth, R.I.) and daughter Stephanie McLennan (Newport) created the event, their goal was to fulfill the competitive goals of sailors with disabilities while helping to better prepare those sailors whose aspirations included representing the USA at the Paralympic Games. The one-day clinic, August 24, is the hallmark of “The Clagett” and exposes the sailors to techniques and strategies courtesy of some of the best sailing minds in the world (including noted sailor Gary Jobson of Annapolis, Md.), and is followed by three days of racing, August 25-27, when the sailors can test and strengthen their skills. It is a formula that has had measurable results. Last year, 12 sailors who had qualified for the 2008 Paralympic Games (six from the USA and six from Canada) competed in The Clagett, with six of those athletes going on to win medals in China.

The U.S.A.’s 2008 SKUD-18 Paralympic Gold Medalist, Maureen McKinnon-Tucker (Marblehead, Mass.), is one of the Paralympians returning to participate in The Clagett, as is Rick Doerr (Clifton, N.J.) who skippers a Sonar. The first year of a quadrennium – the four year cycle on which the Paralympics run – is often a building year and both are sailing here with new crew. In addition, six sailors from the Adaptive Sailing Program at Piers Park Sailing Center (East Boston, Mass.) will compete for the first time. There are seven visually impaired teams competing for the 2009 U.S. Blind Sailing National Championship title, of which five were organized by The Carroll Center for the Blind (Newton, Mass.) which has run its SailBlind program since 1979. They will have to work hard, however, to beat JP Creignou (St. Petersburg, Fla.) who won the IFDS Blind Sailing World Championship at Newport in 2006, and the Sonar Paralympic Bronze Medal at Athens, Greece, in 2004.

Competitors will race the single-person 2.4 Metre, two-person SKUD-18, and the three-person Sonar – the classes sailed in the Paralympic Games. Each class of boat has been specially designed to accommodate the varied needs of its crew and allows everyone to compete on an equal basis. For each blind skipper and crew

aboard one of Sail Newport's fleet of J/22s there are two sighted guides whose primary role is to provide information and perform limited tasks on the boat.

It Takes A Village: One of the high points of The Clagett is the volunteer involvement from non-sailing members of the local community. On the evening of Wednesday, August 26, the competitors will enjoy a cookout prepared by members of the local Aktion Club which is sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Newport. The Aktion Club is for adults living with developmental disabilities who often have many talents but little opportunity to develop or apply them. The club provides opportunities for its members to interact socially and make valuable contributions to society through community service.

About the Event: The C. Thomas Clagett Jr. Memorial Clinic and Regatta honors the late Tom Clagett (1916-2001), a U.S. Navy World War II veteran who learned to sail on the Chesapeake Bay. As a youngster he suffered temporary paralysis as the result of a bout of meningitis; it was an experience that left him with a deep respect for the accomplishments of people with disabilities, especially athletes. The event first offered racing in Sonars in 2003-2004, added 2.4 Metres in 2005, Skud-18s in 2006, and J/22s for 2008.

Additional information on the event can be found online at www.ussailing.net/Clagett/

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