

Canadian J24 Class Association Western District 2002 Annual Report

The big news of the year was the Canadian National J24 Championship held on June 5-9th at West Vancouver Yacht Club. Thirty-Four boats experienced everything from 30 knots and breaking seas to flat calm and 0 gusting to 2. Keith Wittemore of Seattle was deservedly first, Steve Fleckenstein of West Van was second and Bruce Long of Royal Van was third. This is the first time since 1997 that we have hosted the event and it has certainly helped to rejuvenate the fleet.

Our membership numbers have remained steady at about 34 and although we have 24 boats registered in the District, the number that actually participated in racing had fallen over the years. A few boats have been sold to members of the Seattle fleet which has enjoyed a remarkable resurgence. The Nationals has halted the slide and helped to turn us around. For the first time in a number of years, the fleet is starting to grow again.

The third annual Team Race Regatta was held in August 17-18th and was extremely close with first and third place out of 6 three boat teams decided on tie-breakers. Seattle Corinthian Team 1 beat West Van Team 1 for 1st place and Seattle Team 2 beat West Van Team 2 for 3rd place. Clearly we need to practice if we are going to beat Seattle.

The District Championship was hotly contested by 14 boats with the best seven of nine regattas counting. Team J&B prevailed for the third year in a row with 13 points, the Bassetts in Sail Naked were second 19 points and Bruce Long in Flyer was third with 20 points. However, the numbers do not tell the tale as it was down to the last regatta before the matter was decided.

The best news is that the fleet is “compressing”. That is, the difference between the first and last boat in most races is now a matter of a few boat lengths not half a leg or more as was the case in the past. No one boat dominates the fleet and finishes with 3 or 4 boats overlapped are common. It makes for GREAT racing.

We have had a number of social events this year, most recently “Sailors With Brooms”. We had 70(!) J24 sailors and assorted spouses and significant others show up for our year end prize giving/Christmas party at a local curling club. J24 sailors (not being at all competitive) who had never stepped on a curling sheet before were suddenly Olympic Team material shouting “HARD!” “HARD!” to the poor sweepers who could barely stand up let alone sweep. It was truly hilarious and tremendous fun.

Our plan for next year is to sail as a fleet in some of the local Pacific Handicap Racing Fleet races in order to raise our profile and show some of the PHRF boat owners and crew how much fun J24 racing really is. We need to encourage them to “step up to the plate” and go one design racing where there are no excuses. To that end the local Quantum loft has produced J24 “Battle Flags” (patterned after the pink Bermuda J24 fleet battle flags). These are to be flown before the start of every regatta where other classes are around so that we can “get in their face”. We look forward to a great year ahead.

Respectfully Submitted, Jim Burns
District Governor – Western District.