

USEPPA ISLAND, FL, 2010

Catboat Rendezvous

FEB. 27-28

By Gretchen F. Coyle

Fifty-one on the starting line—degrees, that is. Howling winds, fog, rain, no wind, partying, and “Olympic Games” on the beach with the motto “Eat, Play, Laugh, Drink and Sail”—all marked five days of fun at the Useppa Island, FL, 2010 Catboat Rendezvous held the last weekend of February.



A Sandpiper heads back to the beach as a storm approaches. Photo by Gretchen Coyle.

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Started 18 years ago, as an every-other-year source of winter fun, Useppa Island is an 80-acre bridge-less/car-less island, which can hold as many Catboats and over twice as many people. Catboat sailors and enthusiasts from Louisiana, British Columbia, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and places between, converged.

Now known as the “rather cool” Florida winter of 2009/2010, average temperatures were down a record num-



At the starting line. Photo by Gretchen Coyle.

ber of degrees, while in proportion, rain was up. But this only added to the enthusiasm of the sailors in five highly competitive races under the direction of Useppa Island Race Committee Chairman Bob Stevens.

A group of sailing companions from the Metedeconk River Yacht Club in New Jersey arrived by car and plane in Fort Myers. Enthusiastic, talented, and extremely organized, these sailors rented a few houses on the island, entertaining all the island residents including Louie, Useppa manager Chad Cadwell’s honest-to-goodness therapy dog, an extra large Lab, who managed to lie in the middle of the kitchen floor with a Mardi Gras dinner of dirty rice, jambalaya, and shrimp. How good can this get?

Event organizer, Mike Albert of Useppa and Sarasota, lent his boat to Dartmouth, MA-based Marshall Marine owners, Jeff and Kristin Marshall, while co-chair, Jay Taylor of Useppa and Palmetto, FL, turned his over to Gary Alderman of the Snead Island Boat Works in Palmetto, FL.

Dan Hurley of Mantoloking, NJ, won the first two races with crew June Pandino. Paul Gelenitis of Brick, NJ, won one with wife Terri. Another first was scored by Margo Limmer, also from Brick, with Betsy Allison of Newport, RI, as crew. Barry Cochran from Clearwater, FL, placed first in the last race.

Paul Gelenitis ended up first overall. Dr. Bill Welch of Useppa Island was second. Bill wrote the highly informative *Competitive Cat: Racing Gaff-Rigged Catboats*. Third was Gary Alderman of Palmetto.

In the Every-Other-Kind-of Catboat class, a Cat ketch, *Uncle Gus*, owned by Charlie and Pat Ball, brothers from Sarasota, FL, won. They were followed closely by the *Alerion Cat Summer’s Breeze*, owned by the traveling Milams from Lafayette, LA.

“What would the Saints do?” New Orleans football fan



A close finish between Dan Hurley of Mantoloking, NJ, and overall World Champion Sandpiper skipper Paul Gelenitis from Brick, NJ. Photo by Gretchen Coyle.

Mark Milam quipped on captions above pictures he posted on <http://bbs.trailersailor.com> as Cat ketch *Uncle Gus* crept up on *Alerion Summer Breeze* during one race. Wife Tammy was at the helm. “Concentrate, girl; you got this. Like Sean Peyton told the kicker for the Saints, you deserve to be here.” At the leeward mark, the sheet jammed around the motor, and the race went downhill. “Ain’t Catboat sailing fun?” he quipped.

The proof was seen on the water: There just might be as many Catboats in Southern waters as up North.

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