

Star Centennial Regatta



There were 78 Stars at the start of the Centennial Regatta at the Larchmont YC, New York.
Photo Courtesy of Fried Elliott / friedbits.com

The Star Class celebrated its 100th year in 2011 with racing and festivities around the world. The Larchmont Yacht Club on Long Island Sound, hosted the North American Centennial in September, with a regatta for wooden and classic fiberglass Stars followed by racing for an open fleet, including modern Stars as well. Eight sailors from the Sixth District (which is comprised of the Northwestern US and British Columbia) joined the fleet of over 80 boats from six countries. A European Centennial Celebration was held in October in St. Tropez with over 90 boats attending.

While maintaining its strong tradition, the Star has managed to evolve over the years so that today the boat remains challenging and rewarding to sail, continuing to attract some of the world's best sailors. Even though the basic hull design has not changed, Stars from the early years bear little resemblance to today's boats, particularly in the rig department, with the class sporting gaff rigged mainsails until the early 1920's. There are many excellent articles and photographs describing the history of the Star on the class website; www.starclass.org.

In the woodies event, Bill Brosius and Sherwood Smith from Olympia finished fifth, sailing Star number 924 *Alcor*. The boat was built in 1932 by Bob Lamson at

the Blanchard Boat Company in Seattle. Bob was 18 at the time he built the boat. He went on to be one of the founding members of Corinthian Yacht Club and designed and built another *Alcor*, the world's first high altitude pressurized sailplane. While no longer active like the Star *Alcor*, the plane hangs in Seattle's Museum of Flight. The boat was later owned by Sunny Wynne of Seattle and he raced it at the 1949 Worlds in Chicago before the *Alcor* found its way to be a part of the active Star fleet in Olympia. The woodies fleet also included John Rumsey and Dave Bolles sailing the same boat they raced at the North Americans in Seattle in 1962. They even had the same sail from that regatta with them.

Larry Whipple, with crew Rick Burgess finished second in the "classic plastics" event. The Star class first allowed fiberglass hulls in 1968 and boats built before about 1988 qualified for the classic event. It is a testimony to the way the class has managed its development, that many of the wood and older fiberglass boats remain competitive against the newer boats.

Western Long Island Sound, the birthplace of the Star, is known for its shifty winds and the first day of racing for the open fleet fully lived up to that reputation, with a light to moderate breeze blowing off the shore. In the first race that day, Bill and Carl Buchan had

the early lead, but could not hold off John MacCausland and Mark Mendenblatt at the finish. The second race saw Foss Miller, who usually sails his own boat in Seattle and former Puget Sound Star fleet member Jim Revkin, getting their best finish with a 17th.

The next two days saw great breezes for the final four races, as the wind blew straight into Long Island Sound, providing large waves for surfing as the winds gusted well over 20 knots at times. The regatta was won by Mark Mendenblatt and Brian Fatih, who have been working very hard at sailing the Star recently. It was good to see all that hard work pay off as they sailed beautifully for a convincing win. Bill and Carl Buchan finished 12th for

the regatta with Dave Watt and Brett Wilson taking 16th, capping off a good year for Dave, including winning the District championship in Vancouver with Dave Martin, and placing second in the Western Hemisphere championship with Brett in the Spring. Before moving to Seattle, Dave grew up sailing at Larchmont Yacht Club, so this event was a sort of a homecoming for him.

The Star Class is as strong as ever as it moves into its second century. In addition to the many great Star Class regattas each year, West Coast sailors have the 2013 World Championship and all the activity associated with that event to look forward to. While Long Island Sound may have been the birthplace of the Star, one can't think of Star sailing without thinking of San Diego. Some of the greatest Star skippers and crews have come from there and San Diego Yacht Club has hosted some of the Star Class' most memorable events, including seven World Championships. Once again Star sailors will converge upon the waters off Point Loma to race for the Gold Star. The last time the Worlds was held in San Diego, Ross Macdonald from Vancouver and Eric Jespersen from Sidney were the winners. Star sailors from the Northwest will be there again in 2013 testing their skill against the best from around the world and trying to bring home a victory.

by Carl Buchan