

Inception of the Lake Champlain Championship Series

The original Lake Champlain Racing Conference began in 1968. It was formed by the three clubs of that era, LCYC, MBBC, and VSC, each club agreeing to provide two races. They used some existing races and created a few others specifically to be included in the Conference. All were weekend events – two were overnights, the others were two-day events with one or two races each day. MBBC's events were Royal Savage and Lake Champlain; VSC's were Valcour I/II and Isle St. Michel; LCYC's were Ladies Cup and Cmdr Macdonough. In 1982 LCYC withdrew the Ladies Cup from the Conference and created the two-day Odziozo in its place.

The Conference was a stand-alone structure with a Commodore and other officers, an annual printed document, dues, awards, and a bank account. In the 1980s attendance began to decline, mostly due to the growth of weeknight racing that did not require getting crew for two weekend days six times a summer. At the end of the 2000 season, after 33 years of providing great racing, the Conference closed down.

That year Jeff Hill and others advocated for creating a committee or group to administer some sort of competition for the Cannon at least, but no such group was ever formed.

The Conference remained in the logbooks of the Lake Champlain clubs for many years, but there was no scoring structure for it. At the beginning of the 2012 racing season Dave Powlison and Lea Ann Smith were the RC Chairs of their respective clubs, LCYC and MBBC. They discussed removing the reference to the Conference from the Logs of both clubs, but for Lea Ann there was a depressing air of finality about that proposition that motivated her to search for another format that would work for today's busier sailing families. She called her racing friends Don Brush and Bill Fastiggi to brainstorm. Bill recommended she also call Dale Hyerstay, then head of race management at LCYC.

Lea Ann and Dale initiated discussion sessions with the local sailing community about the possibility of a different structure that would use a website as the basis for scoring selected existing races of the now four clubs, Royal Savage being the fourth.

A core group was formed to try to achieve the above objective. That group included race officials of the four clubs: Lea Ann from MBBC, Mark Stata from VSC, Wendy Friant from RSYC, and Dale from LCYC. Also included were four adjunct participants: Don Brush & Jeff Hill, past Racing Conference competitors; and Peter Levin & Skip McClellan who had volunteered to be scorers. Keith Kennedy participated as Dale's race management sidekick at LCYC.

To provide more LCYC opinions to the process than just his own, Dale convened an exploratory session comprised of the four class representatives to the LCYC Regatta Committee: Walt Marti for Class A, Gene Cloutier for Class B, John O'Rourke for Class C, and Mike Barker for Class JaM. Also attending that session were Jeff Hill; the two volunteer scorers, Peter Levin & Skip McClellan; and Wendy Friant, the Regatta Chair of Royal Savage Yacht Club. Lea Ann could not attend.

Here is the agenda for that session and the positions on each item that were agreed to by consensus of those present. These were then passed on to the core group for their use and consideration as they began the larger task of putting together the format for a new lake-wide racing competition.

What would be the format? . . .

Consensus: There should be two Series:

- The Cannon Series, for first, second, third overall among all boats from anywhere on the lake – Cannon trophy for first, recognition for second and third.
- The ‘Option’ Series, for top ranking by class among all boats from anywhere on the lake – recognition for first, second, and third in each of Spin classes A, B, C, D and JaM.

Would the series be race-based or club-based? . . .

This item was not worded this way on the session agenda, so it got bypassed and did not get discussed or decided.

What races would be included? . . .

Consensus: (even though the above item was not discussed, these groupings are race-based)

- Cannon Series:
 - Ladies Cup (LCYC)
 - Royal Savage (MBBC)
 - Mayor’s Cup (VSC)
 - Two of the Cmdr Macdonough (LCYC), Lake Champlain (MBBC), Omnium Day 1
- Option Series:
 - All of the above, plus:
 - Odziozo (LCYC)
 - Medical Madness Day 1 (VSC)
 - Regatta for Lake Champlain
 - Diamond Island (RSYC)

How would the two Series be scored? . . .

Consensus:

- Several different scoring systems were reviewed before deciding that both series would be scored using a high-point version of the Volvo scoring system. No throw-outs in either series, other than the one overnight in the Cannon Series.

Who would score the series? . . .

Consensus:

- Peter Levin assisted by Skip McClellan.

With the results of the above discussion as a starter, the core group began the process of formulating a structure for the Championship Series.

That process was not simple. Deliberations were complex and comprehensive. Initially there were three meetings, numerous conversations, and 244 emails. All efforts were dedicated to the task of constructing a structure similar in form to the earlier Conference that would provide fun, fair, varied, enticing, and challenging racing among the entire range of boat classes in a diverse number of venues across a reasonable range of the lake, all without requiring registration or fees, where “your participation is your registration.”

Here are the major conclusions of the core group:

- The Cannon Series will be based solely on Overall scoring.
- The name of the new second series is “Champlain Series”
- The Champlain Series will be based solely on Class scoring.
- For simplicity, the core group set class groupings that would be used for Series scoring regardless of individual club class groupings.
- There will not be any two-day events in the list of Series races with the exception of the overnights and the Omnium. Two-day races killed the Conference.
- The Cannon Series would be club-based, with each club providing a one day-race. Also considered were: An invitational sail-off race in Burlington Bay between club champions sent by each club; Designating races for the Cannon Series without regard to what club or group hosted the race; Selecting races based on their geographic location – near-south, central, and near-north. Either of the last two would allow selecting the Mayor’s Cup and the Omnium. Two key facts led the core group to declare for the club-based option and no sail-off.

First, from its inception to its demise, the Conference was club-based, and it was deemed highly important to sustain that tradition. Second, without the unqualified support of the four clubs the success of the new Series would be at risk, whereas with each club providing one of the four one-day races the Series will be full of shared energy and support, and success should surely follow.

This decision resulted in replacing Ladies Cup with Odziozo as LCYC’s day-race for the Cannon Series, as was originally declared by LCYC in 1982 in the old Conference. Ladies Cup was moved to the Champlain Series and Omnium out of Cannon Series and into Champlain Series.

This decision resulted in moving the Mayor’s Cup to the Champlain Series and replacing it with the Medical Madness Day 1. Mayor’s Cup was never a part of the Conference. It was originally created by VSC with the support of the then-mayor of Plattsburgh, but a later mayor withdrew the city’s support and VSC was not able to sustain the event on its own, at which point Sunrise Rotary picked it up. Because MC is no longer their event, VSC leadership selected Medical Madness Day 1 (a two-race event) as their club race for the new LCC Series. They are excited about the new Series and plan to make Med-Mad a premier event for all contenders, both Cannon and Champlain. [In the second year of the new Series VSC declared the Mayors Cup to be their club’s official race for the Cannon Series and the Valcour Race as their Champlain Series race.]

This decision gave full support to Royal Savage YC by moving their regatta up to the Cannon Series from the Champlain Series. With the enthusiastic support of Point Bay Marina, RSYC wanted to become a player in the new Series. They named their race “The Diamond Island Regatta.” Both LCYC and MBBC agreed to provide support, training, and race management help to RSYC to make this event an exciting addition to lake-wide racing and to the Cannon and Champlain Series.

- The format of the Cannon Series is the best five out of six named races; if all are six are raced the best five finishes will be counted.

Several day-race, overnight race, and throw-out formats were considered. Potential LCYC contenders all said they would likely sail all Cannon races regardless of the number of throw-outs, but they each also cited the threat of ‘a wedding’ intruding on their race schedule. And since ‘the wedding’ does not discriminate between day races and overnight races, a format was designated that allows a throw-out but also will always include one required overnight. Flexible format, simple solution – unless there are two weddings on different weekends.

- The scoring procedure is to be simple, both for the clubs and for both Series. Club scorers will not have to do anything special regarding Series scoring, even though the scoring structures are different. The Series scorers will use a club’s race results as their source data; they will then apply the Series scoring logic to that club’s data to compute the Series scores, both by class and overall. Since the club’s scores for its Series races will become Series scores, all of those scored club racers will become Series contenders without ever having to register – hence the new catch phrase “Your participation is your registration”.

The Series scoring gives more points the more boats that are beaten. This helps to keep large fleet and small fleet results in perspective.

Many of the boats contending in the Champlain Series will not be able to compete in every race in all the venues in all parts of the lake, and yet they can still have the fun of seeing how they are doing in comparison with all the other boats facing those same limitations. However, the more a boat participates in races at other clubs the higher will be its cumulative season score – it is hoped this rationale will promote participation in general and that it will also encourage and engender more inter-club racing at all levels of competition.

The Series results will be posted on the Series website after every named race, so racers can check their progressive standings in almost real time as the season progresses. Clubs will be encouraged to post the Series results on their own websites, to provide a link to the Series website, or both.

- Series awards will be presented as part of the end-of-season awards event of one of the four sponsoring clubs, beginning with LCYC for 2013.

The LCYC group and the core group were individually and collectively excited about the prospects for the success of this new structure in fomenting increased inter-club racing and the cooperation and camaraderie that goes with it.

[Camaraderie – “mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together”]

Dale Hyerstay
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