

## Chesapeake Racer Profile



# Stephanie Reuer

**S**tephanie Reuer, owner of the J/35 *Dakota Girl*, thinks she might be the only racing skipper on the Bay who's sung opera on stage at the Kennedy Center with Placido Domingo. Having grown up in South Dakota catching walleye on the Missouri River with her dad, she feels at home on the water. A career in international trade and a masters in opera performance led her to the Washington, DC area, where she launched a career in trade compliance and sang part-time for a decade with the Washington National Opera Company. Still working as a self-proclaimed "regulatory nerd" and having just moved to a new home in Annapolis from Deale, MD, Reuer has traded in her passion for singing for racing.

"I didn't step foot on a boat until I was 34," she says, and she bought her first boat the next year. "I fell completely in love with it." That she didn't start racing until six years later is, "Proof that life does begin at 40." After crewing for several years and racing her own PHRF boats, she listened to the gentle nudging of her boyfriend Randy Bruscup on the benefits of one-design racing and eventually chose the J/35 for the affordability, the competitive fleet, and the support of the class. Not having a boat mortgage has enabled her to hire professional coaches and ramp up her team more quickly. She says, "We have received a lot of advice, coaching, and moral support over the last two years from each and every J/35 program, especially from the team leaders: *Maggie, Windependent, Aunt Jean, Medicine Man*, and others."

In 2008, the *Dakota Girl* team took second in the Annapolis to St. Michaels race and won the J/35 one-design class and PHRF overall for the Tred Avon YC's Robson Round the Buoys Race. Winning a three-way tie for second in the Herrington Harbor SA's Integrity Yacht Sales Invitational added one more to the "nice bling for the mantle" this summer. Reuer says, "I've been very pleased with the improvements the team has made this year. We've had a lot of fun together along the way, and we've improved consistently."

This Bay-racing *Dakota* girl's philosophy: "We want to race with people we like spending time with. The team is the boat. I certainly couldn't race a J/35 by myself. We want to have a serious, competitive boat that finds joy in learning and getting better. A famous conductor told me once that I needed to 'find the joy in the work.' I've always thought that was a valuable philosophy that's applicable to almost any endeavor, including sailboat racing."

### **SpinSheet: Who have been your biggest sailing influences?**

Dan Wittig, Pete and Dave Scheidt, Dr. Stuart Walker (whom I've never met, but I find him to be an inspiration competing as he does into his eighties), Henry Fretz, Bruce Artman, and Dave Shaeffer.

### **What is your favorite sailing venue?**

I think Herrington Harbor SA on Herring Bay is a beautiful venue. You can be on the water and racing in 15 minutes. They also have interesting race courses, no matter which way the wind is blowing.

### **Who are your best sailing buddies?**

Randy Bruscup, Jenn Hines, Kristen Berry, Anne Needham, Vaughn Micciche, Heather Spurlock, Dorian Haldeman, Marvin Imhoff, John Flowe, Vanessa Pert, Elaine Dennehy, Marie Harrison, and Ted Greenfield.

### **Is there a place on the Bay that makes you think, "This is why I live here"?**

The Wye River. There are places like that on the Bay where you can watch the sunset, where you can't see a building or a person, and you can still feel what the ancient Bay must have been like. It reconnects you to the place.

### **What is your radio dial tuned to?**

I listen to classical music and NPR. I don't have an iPod. Music is an active experience for me, so if it's on, I have to pay attention to it—I can't just listen to it in the background. I'd rather make music.

### **What magazines do you read?**

*Speed and Smarts, Sailing World, Bon Appétit, and SpinSheet.*

### **Do you have any superstitions before a race?**

Before every race, I pray that no one gets hurt, everyone onboard enjoys themselves, and for some help in doing well [smile]. I'm always cognizant of what a big responsibility it is to have a bunch of people out there on a boat.

### **What gear do you depend on?**

Keen sandals, Dirty Dog sunglasses, and Harken Black Magic four-finger gloves.

### **What advice would you give a young racing sailor?**

Maximize your time on the water. Take advantage of the many people who are willing to share their knowledge if you're actively learning. Get out on the water—stay out on the water! Sail little boats. I wish I'd done so.

### **What are your sailing goals?**

Our goal is to win a major J/35 one-design event on the Bay. We know that a podium finish is absolutely in our grasp. A first overall may be a reach, but we believe in having stretch goals, too.