

AYC's Inaugural Race Officials Symposium

Annapolis Yacht Club's inaugural Race Officials Symposium was a rousing success with a large contingent of visitors enjoying a weekend filled with interesting lectures by special guest speakers, informative presentations provided by experts on specific topics, panel discussions and more.

Racing News

AYC's Inaugural Race Officials Symposium

Annapolis Yacht Club's inaugural Race Officials Symposium was a rousing success with a large contingent of visitors enjoying a weekend filled with interesting lectures by special guest speakers, informative presentations provided by experts on specific topics, panel discussions and more.

"This event was, without a doubt, the most informative and educational sailing related seminar I have ever had the pleasure of attending," said Randy Richter of the Magothy River Sailing Association. "It was very well organized and extremely on point. AYC and the sailing community should be extremely proud of the time and effort to bring this event to fruition."

More than 100 sailors, race committee volunteers, judges and umpires from as far away as California and Massachusetts gathered for the two-day seminar held at the sparkling new Annapolis Yacht Club Sailing Center. Attendees from dozens of yacht clubs and sailing associations were treated to four overall sessions and 27 individual breakout sessions.

"The symposium offered the opportunity to welcome a wide range of folks to Annapolis Yacht Club for collaboration, learning and networking to raise the bar on sailboat racing on the Chesapeake Bay and beyond," event chairman Taran Teague said. "Our new Sailing Center building offers the platform to do just that! This beautiful facility will help us continue the club's boating mission."

Tucker Thompson, official host of the 35th America's Cup, kicked off the event with an in-depth review of major events around the world. Thompson provided an update on current activities surrounding the America's Cup while also touching on the Volvo Ocean Race and the World Match Racing Tour.

Current US Sailing president Cory Sertl delivered an informative lunchtime talk on Saturday, bringing the audience up-to-date on the latest activities of the sport's governing body. Saturday's session was capped by a panel discussion regarding the Best Practices on Officiating the Sport of Sailing."

AYC member Dick Neville, who has served as on-water chairman of Key West Race Week and Block Island Race Week, provided tremendous insight. Veteran North Sails professional Chris Larson led a panel of sailors that offered thoughts and observations.

Matthew Hill, Race Administration Director of US Sailing, was so impressed by what he saw during the weekend he said the sport's governing body will attempt to duplicate the program created by AYC.

"Thanks to Annapolis Yacht Club for hosting the Race Officials Symposium. It was a great opportunity to share ideas and best practices, as well as to see AYC's spectacular new facilities," Hill said. "US Sailing is working on a model for similar regional symposiums around the country to provide opportunities for race officials to get together with the goal of providing excellent service to our customers, racing sailors." Sunday's session began with a powerful presentation from Bruce Naim and Ashley Love of T2P Productions on the basic rules of engagement. Naim and Love held the audience's attention on the topic of "Connecting with Sailors: Promoting Events through Better Communications and Modern Media Capabilities."

Individual concurrent sessions reviewed topics ranging from innovative race course formats and ensuring fair starts to how to manage your race management volunteers and weather apps. Other important subjects such as safety equipment, race participant tracking, certification programs and environmental issues were also covered in the robust two-day package.

Dobbs Davis of the Offshore Racing Congress spoke about measurement and rating systems, Capital Gazette sailing editor Bill Wagner discussed regatta publicity while Naval Academy Varsity Offshore Sailing head coach Jahn Thansky addressed safety regulations for racing as well as dealing with unexpected conditions.

Eastport Yacht Club race committee chairman Keith Jacobs talked about cross-club collaboration while Bruce Bingman, past chairman of the US Sailing Offshore Committee, provided a detailed look into the state of handicap racing.

Teague, the event chair, delivered several informative presentations regarding the various mechanics of race committee work. Sandy Grosvenor, Annapolis Yacht Club race committee chair, discussed the effective use of video in race officiating.

All attendees reported that the seminar was highly informative with the only complaint being there wasn't enough time to attend all the sessions in which they were interested.

"Thank you very much for hosting the Race Official Symposium in AYC's new and wonderful sailing center. A lot of useful information was presented, meaningful discussions took place and networking opportunities were enhanced – all of which speak highly of AYC's commitment to improving the quality of race management," said Mark Hasslinger, a veteran race official with Severn Sailing Association.

Indeed, the newly-opened AYC Sailing Center was the star of the weekend as many visitors got their first inside look at the facility, which was designed with events such as this in mind. With an ability to create multiple separate "classrooms" and reception areas, all with a spectacular view of the Annapolis waterfront, the Sailing Center proved ideal for hosting such a wide-ranging symposium.

"This was a fantastic weekend of learning and sharing ideas. All those in attendance were thrilled with the variety of information presented," AYC commodore Jim Ellis said. "Without question, the symposium was an excellent example of why we built the Sailing Center – to promote and advance the sport."