



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 9, 2025

Contact: Linda Ambrose,
AYC Harborside Director
lambrose@annapolisyc.org

40th Biennial Annapolis to Newport Race gets Underway on Friday

Annapolis, MD, June 9 — Maryline O'Shea and her all-female crew aboard Allegiant exuded excitement and enthusiasm as they motored into the Chesapeake Bay for the start of the 2025 Annapolis-to-Newport Race.

All eight sailors wore matching shirts and cheered in unison as they gathered together in the cockpit of the J/42 for a photo. It was the start of an adventure and the Allegiant team certainly brings a positive attitude to undertaking the 475-nautical mile passage.

The 40th biennial Annapolis-to-Newport Race got underway Friday with 37 boats in four classes starting in south-southeasterly winds ranging from 5 to 7 knots. The Annapolis Yacht Club Race Committee, led by AYC Co-Race Chair and Event PRO Bruce Bingman, got off four clean starts to send the Friday fleet down the bay.

ORC Performance Cruiser was first off the line and Legacy, a Beneteau First 40 skippered by Nick Carter of Lewes, Delaware, got a great start and led the class to Thomas Point Lighthouse. Lucky Eights, a J/124 skippered by Annapolis Yacht Club member Keith Cole, is part of that eight-boat class.

Cole has campaigned Lucky Eights extensively on the Chesapeake Bay, but this is his first time taking the boat offshore. He has a core crew of sailors that have been together eight years and works well together, so is confident the J/124 can be a contender for class honors.

"I'm optimistic we'll be leading the pack for at least part of the race. I think we'll do pretty well," said Cole, who was concerned about the forecast that showed the wind shutting down on Saturday morning.

"The challenge is to get out of the bay before the wind dies. We should have enough breeze to get most of the way down the bay by late Friday night or early Saturday morning, but then it peters out," said Cole, adding that forecasts show a downwind run in the Atlantic Ocean. "It's possible we could have a spinnaker ride most of the way to Newport."

ORC Performance Cruiser 2 was second to come across the line and that class includes skipper Hattie Warwick-Smith, who was presented with the C. Gaither Scott Memorial Trophy following the 2023 Annapolis-to-Newport Race.

Warwick-Smith and crew showed tremendous toughness in sailing the Tartan 34 Iris to victory in ORC Cruiser two years ago. Iris was the only boat in the class to finish the race, which featured high winds and heavy seas.

“We faced all sorts of challenges last time; It was an amazing adventure for our crew,” Warwick-Smith said. “It was not an easy race in terms of crew morale; Our spirits sort of plummeted along the way; it was a lot of perseverance and gutsiness on behalf of the crew.”

Warwick-Smith returns this year with a new boat, having purchased a Swan 38 named Bellatrix. In 2023, Iris finished after the prizegiving ceremony was held at Waite’s Wharf and the C. Gaither Scott Memorial Trophy presentation was held at the docks of the Newport Yachting Center.

“I wanted a boat that was faster so we could get there in time for the party,” Warwick-Smith quipped. “Hopefully, with Swan 38 we’ll keep up a bit better.”

This year, there is a relatively robust ORC Doublehanded class featuring seven boats and Annapolis Yacht Club member Paul Parks is making his debut in the discipline. Parks purchased a J/124 that was set up for doublehanded racing and has a proven pedigree in offshore events.

It was previously owned by Gibson Island resident Robert Dunigan and competed in the Annapolis-to-Newport Race numerous times. Dunigan has upgraded to an XP44, which is the scratch boat in the class.

“I saw how many boats were entered and figured this is probably going to be the best race of the season for the doublehanded division,” Parks said. “It’s going to be a great challenge, but it should also be a lot of fun.”

Parks, who has George Saunders aboard as crew, last competed in the Annapolis-to-Newport Race more than three decades ago aboard a custom-made Farr 40. This will likely be his last time doing the iconic, point-to-point distance race and it will be memorable because of the doublehanded aspect.

“We’re going to do short watches so that we stay fresh,” Parks said. “You’ve got to manage your rest and your food because you’re not at your best without either one of those.”

There are 14 entries in PHRF class, which was last to start on Friday. It features many of the same boats that competed in ORC 4 for the 2023 A2N with skipper Stephen Hale sailing the Salona 380 Cookie Monster to victory on corrected time.

Skipper Stephen Hale noted that roughly half the fleet consisted of boats 42 feet or longer with symmetrical spinnakers, while the other half was less than 42 feet with asymmetrical spinnakers.

“It looks like a very competitive class with a lot of really good boats. Our objective is to sail the best we can and hopefully that will put us in contention,” Hale said. “The weather forecast has been changing every day, so I’m not sure what we’ll ultimately get.”

The Naval Academy Offshore Sailing team continued a longstanding tradition by competing in the Annapolis-to-Newport Race and has three entries in PHRF. There will be a competition within the competition among the three Navy 44-footers Defiance, Integrity and Tenacious.

###