

# Wintry blast hits racers in Key Largo.



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Blustery, chilly conditions hampered the Force 5 Midwinter Championships in Key Largo in mid-February, but regardless, sailors from across North America took to the sea for a fun-filled week of racing hosted by the Upper Keys Sailing Club (UKSC). Unlike past years, the 2015 event was expanded to encompass a full calendar week and new events were added, including the first-ever Force 5 double-handed championship, a Portsmouth Regatta and a long-distance race to Nest Key.

The weather became so bad that racing was cancelled entirely on Thursday, February 19<sup>th</sup> as winds exceeded 25 knots—a tall order for the 14-foot Force 5 to handle, especially those lacking a short-rig sail plan. Similar conditions persisted the next day, as did a small-craft weather advisory, yet races were held—many a Force Fiver went



Fred Meno, right, accepts the standard-rig Force 5 Midwinter Championship trophy and traveling plaque from Tom Trump of the Upper Keys Sailing Club February 21<sup>st</sup> in Key Largo, Florida.

overboard, much to the amusement of spectators on shore. UKSC chase boats

ensured no one came to any harm, however, unless you count prodigious amounts of goose bumps and chattering teeth.

Bruce McCord of Miami has competed in the regatta every year since 2007 and said “Triangle races with reaches and runs so fast—it was more like being in a rollercoaster than a sailboat. Upwind legs with so much spray flashing in my face filled the boat faster than the bailer could drain it.” Another racer, Keith Schrecengost of Greenville, South Carolina, said “It was a race to see who could capsize to windward while on plane and right the boat before being exhausted.”

Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup> saw more amenable conditions arrive at

the race course. The breeze was still on the brisk side but the air had warmed considerably, and three races were held as scheduled. “This was the day to sail,” said Schrecengost, who was competing in the Midwinter Championships for the fourth time. “Actual races, and newbies who could hold on enough to finally get through a tack or jibe without straining a sphincter or spilling a beer. [It was] a complete success in spite of Canadians and Ohioans bringing their winter woe south with them to gain the upper hand. I can’t wait till next year to see what I can break and who I can scare.”

Overall, 29 entrants competed in the Midwinter Championships, with Fred Meno of Fort Worth, Texas, winning the standard-rig division and Force 5 class association president John Barrere of Fresno, California, triumphing in the short-rig division. Marty and Kim Schilke of Bloomington, Indiana, won the double-handed championship. Complete results can be found at <http://bit.ly/1E2X6eB>.

## New venue for “Super Bowl” of powerboat racing

The Huntington Classic Regatta in Huntington, West Virginia, will be the venue for the 2015 North American Championship—powerboat racing’s version of the Super Bowl. Racing is scheduled for July 24-26 at Harris Riverfront Park and will be broadcast on Fox Sports. Organizers of the Three Rivers Regatta in Pittsburgh (host city for the past three years) opted not to apply to run the championship event.

Huntington’s regatta beat out the Boomsday Festival held over Labor Day weekend in Knoxville, Tennessee, when the sport’s sanctioning body, the American Power Boat Association (APBA), was searching for a new championship venue.

“It is an honor that we have been selected as the host city of the APBA’s 2015 North American Championship,” Huntington mayor Steve Williams stated in a news release. “Our regatta along the mighty Ohio River has gained the reputation as a premiere venue for the sport, and there is no question that will continue in 2015.” [apba.org](http://apba.org)

By BRIAN HARTZ