

MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL DN ICE YACHT RACING ASSOCIATION

# RUNNER TRACKS

SEPTEMBER 2021



**BETTER LATE THAN NEVER BY ERIC SMITH US2500**

**COMMODORE'S COLUMN BY JODY KJOLLER US5435**

**DNICEBOAT.ORG - THE NEW WORLD PORTAL WEBSITE**

**ZEN, ADRENALINE, & REFLECTION BY RHEA NICHOLAS US4783**

# CONTENT

Cover Photo: Steve Orlebeke readies to tack for the lay line at the 2021 U.S. Nationals on Black Lake in MI  
Photo: Gretchen Dorian gretchendorian.com



## GET A SAIL NUMBER MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Contact Ray Gauthier US5576  
Email: ray.gauthier@comcast.net

04

### DN WORLD PORTAL

dniceboat.org, the newest website to all things DN.

05

### REGATTA SCHEDULE & OFFICERS

Continental and regional regattas for the upcoming season & international and regional class officers.

08

### BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

How Eric Smith US2500 became totally hooked on DN sailing.



16

### ZEN & ADRENILINE

2021 U.S. Nationals Report  
By Rhea Nicholas US4783

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RUNNER TRACKS is edited by IDNIYRA Secretary Deb Whitehorse

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# COMMODORE'S REPORT

FROM THE COMMODORE

JODY KJOLLER US5435, TEMPERANCE, MICHIGAN, USA

I want to start off my first Runner Tracks column by saying thank you to the IDNIYRA membership for voting me in as Commodore. I look forward to serving the greatest one-design class on the planet as best as I can. I'd also like to thank past Commodore Warren Nethercote, who went above and beyond by serving for three years. That gave me a chance to get acclimated to the goings-on within the class.

Another thank you goes to David Frost for becoming our new Vice Commodore. I'm sure he will be an asset to the organization in his new position. I look forward to the next couple of years working with Frosty, along with our regional Rear Commodores Chad Atkins (Eastern), Rob Holman (Central), Chris Burger (Western), and Colin Duncan (Canadian), Bob Cummins (past Commodore), and our Secretary/Treasurer (and many other things) Deb Whitehorse.

I hope everyone's summer has been great. I've been building new hulls and thinking of what else I need to get done before the quickly approaching season begins. The Great Western Challenge is right around the corner.

Rob Holman continues to put together the 2022 North American championship regatta scheduled for January 23-29, 2022. He is also putting together a contingency plan for a U.S. Nationals if we cannot run a ranking regatta due to Covid lock downs that may still be in effect. We hope to have more news on this coming shortly.

There are a few proposals left on the table from last year. It is currently unclear if IDNIYRA Europe will be voting on these issues this year. There was very low membership the previous year, so their governing committee felt it would be unreasonable to hold a vote on the issues. Hopefully, we'll know more about this soon. These proposals can be found in past Runner Tracks issues. [2020 December: Proposal to Amend Fuselage Numbers; 2020 September: Proposal to Change Sail Window Size and Proposal to Add Self-Releasing Steering Post Head.]

Think ice, and I hope to see you on it soon.

Jody Kjoller IDNIYRA Commodore



Photo: gretchendorian.com

# dniceboat.org New World Portal

DNIYRA and IDNIYRA Europe have published a new website, **dniceboat.org**, a portal to provide a unified brand that will host information common to both continents.

**dniceboat.org** is where international class members can easily find common governing documents, contact information, regatta information, results, and more. **dniceboat.org** will be a portal to **idniyra.org** and **idniyra.eu**, which will continue to keep members informed of their specific continental affairs.

Class members will no longer have to wait for a printed yearbook to learn the latest technical specifications and interpretations because the website will reflect all recent changes. One of the goals of

the new website is to attract new members and sponsors to the world's most popular iceboat class through exciting videos and photos that tell the story of DN sailing.

The Home/Landing Page has information and links to the following informational pages:

- Specifications & Plans
- Rules of Ice Sailing
- Yearbook (pdf)
- Championship History
- International Rank List
- Videos
- Links to IDNIYRA & IDNIYRA Europe
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# BETTER LATE

ERIC SMITH US2500 DISCOVERS THE THRILL & SENSE OF COMMUNITY WITH DN SAILING

*Michigan's Eric Smith US2500 had a successful 2021 season, winning a race at the U.S. Nationals where he placed third in the Gold fleet and winning the Central Region Championship. Eric took time this summer to thoughtfully reply to a series of interview questions for this newsletter. The following article is his responses edited for Runner Tracks.*

The first time I ever saw a DN was in the basement of the Boston sail loft in 1982 (my first real job was working there when I was a teenager for Skip Boston.) I thought it was about the coolest thing I had ever seen, which is why I still remember seeing it to this day. However, I never sailed one until the winter of 2016. It's hard to explain why it took me 34 years to try DN sailing. The opportunity just never presented itself, and I never thought to seek it out.

I started soft water sailing on my family's sailboat on Lake St. Clair in Michigan at about 7 or 8 years of age. I was racing by age 12. Up to my early 20s, I sailed anytime and on anything, from Windsurfers and Lightnings to an Islander 40. Sailing stopped in my mid-twenties until a few years ago; there was never enough time, and we had moved too far away from any lake of significance. For me, soft water sailing is currently just short course buoy racing crewing on a J100 on Lake St Clair and recreational sailing on a Nacra catamaran.

I bought my first DN (a disaster of a boat in hindsight) off Craigs List from a neighbor. As a recent empty-nester, I was looking for a toy to play with in the winter. I knew no one who sailed them and did not even know how to put it together.

**...THREE HOURS LATER, I WAS TOTALLY EXHAUSTED AND HAD JUST HAD THE MOST EXCITING SAILING EXPERIENCE OF MY ENTIRE LIFE.**

I brought the pile of pieces home, carried it onto the ice, figured out what piece fit where, got in, and sat





# THAN NEVER

"NOW I AM JUST THANKFUL THAT I STARTED IT AT ALL. BETTER LATE THAN NEVER."



there not moving. I did not even know that DNs needed pushing to get started. Anyways, three hours later, I was totally exhausted and had just had the most exciting sailing experience of my entire life.

Two things were immediately apparent: I wanted to do more iceboating, and I needed to find someone to help me out. I started to search the internet to learn about iceboating, and Ron Sherry's name kept popping up. I remembered Ron from my brief stint working at Boston Sails and from some soft water racing with him as a teenager. (Fun fact; Ron and I both sailed our first Port-Huron to Mackinac race together.) However, I had not spoken to him in over 30 years, but I decided to call him, followed by a couple of trips to his shop and hours of questions he patiently answered.

Based on his advice, I bought a different used boat (from Doug McFarland, the previous US2500) and started my first racing season at the Western Challenge in December 2016. Not a single race was sailed at that event that year, but I was still totally hooked.

## **NEVER HAD I EXPERIENCED SUCH A SENSE OF COMMUNITY WITHIN A SAILING FLEET.**

The 2018 North American Championship was my first continental event. I was greatly surprised to finish high enough in the qualifier to sail in the Gold fleet. I really did not belong there, and although I enjoyed the event, racing in that fleet was very humbling, to say the least.

*Continued next page*

At that event, I learned two things. One was that I had a lot to learn about making a DN go fast; I was simply in awe of the speeds obtained by the other competitors. The other was that even at a national championship level, everyone I met there with was genuinely friendly, helpful, and just fun to be around, an important point I want to emphasize. I have spent a lot of time soft water racing with lots of boats and fleet types. Never had I experienced such a sense of community within a sailing fleet. I love sailing DNs, to be sure, but it is not the boat that makes me think about it all summer long; I miss being with all the people that make it so much fun every time we get together on the ice.

Being an engineer with a decent machine shop at my disposal makes designing and building my hardware very convenient. I do not think the hardware provides me with much of a competitive advantage, but it does provide satisfaction to sail using parts you have made. All the hardware on my boat was made or significantly altered by myself except for the mainsheet track & blocks (the Harken stuff is perfect already).

I have teamed up with Ron Sherry to provide him with the mandrel and mast hardware for his new carbon mast, as well as the molds and CNC machined cores for his newest planks. I have supplied a few people with some of the hardware I have designed, but I am not trying to turn it into a business or anything like that.

One of the most useful things I designed and built was set of runner alignment gauges with ball bearing pivots and cross slides. The advantage of the bearing slides is you can use them with the boat fully loaded up and dynamically monitor the alignment change (hopefully none) as you increase or

decrease load on the plank. That way, I know my runners are not just aligned at the classic "skipper weight plus 30 pounds", but throughout all the range of loads I would expect to see in all conditions. The system uses a laser, shooting from one runner over the other and then back, reflected off a mirror, to measure the alignment. They were the first thing I built for my program, and I have always had good confidence in my runner alignment as a result.

The other thing that I do differently from most sailors is that I profile my runners on a CNC mill. I wrote a computer program to form almost any profile to the runner edge that I want. Using the machine removes the skill requirement for a good profiling job, so I know that when the runner comes off the machine, the edge will not only be the shape I programmed, but it will also be straight, on center, and parallel with the inboard runner mounting face. The trick, of course, is deciding what the correct profile is, and I am still working on figuring that out. I'm sure many DN sailors out there can do just as good of a job profiling a runner on a belt sander, but getting that good at profiling runners takes years of practice, and I'm just not that patient.

I do not do anything special to prepare for an event. I try to be prepared to sail all season long by keeping everything ready all the time. I am actually quite obsessive about having everything on the boat as perfect as I can make it. When I get to the ice, I want to focus on sailing, not what I need to do to get my boat ready. In this sport, there are so few days that we get to sail each year, the thought of getting sidelined by an equipment failure makes me cringe, so I do my best to make sure that does not happen. Of course, like most racers, I go over my runners after every day on the ice and do my best to keep them in perfect shape. It is no secret that they are

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a metal tool against a rotating abrasive wheel. The wheel is spinning, creating a blurred motion effect. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some industrial equipment.

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an essential part of the DN package. For significant events, I like to get there and set up early if possible. Sailing the site the day before the event is a huge advantage in my mind.

I am a very detailed, data-driven person. The one thing I understood right away about the DN was that it is not a simple boat despite its simple appearance. Everything matters. You can feel a 1/8" adjustment on a sidestay immediately. A 1/2" change on the halyard will make you feel like you are sailing a different boat. The choices in runners (style, material, angle, rocker, lead-in, exhaust, edge prep, on and on) make for infinite variety, and it is all important.

The one right thing that I did from the start was to keep records every time I sailed the boat. After each race (sanctioned or scrub), I record the environmental factors (wind, ice, snow), my boat settings (stays, halyard, sail, battens, plank position, runner data, etc.), and then make notes on how the boat felt and performed. My notebook always comes on the ice with me. Afterward, I transcribe all my notes into a spreadsheet that I constantly refer to not only repeat what worked in the past but to understand better what is happening with

the boat and how all the set-up choices interact with each other and the conditions. This last year, I finally started to feel confident about my set-up choices, which allowed me to shift my focus from what the boat was doing to me to what I was doing to the boat. That might be a confusing statement, but what I mean to say is that the first few years I sailed the DN, I was only paying attention to what the boat was doing that I didn't like and focused on what set-up changes I needed to make to try and tame the beast. Once I was confident that the boat was set up well for the conditions, I was able to stop paying attention to that and focus on sailing better and making the boat do what I wanted. That shift in focus made all the difference in my sailing last year.

DN iceboaters are amazing people, and I have had so much help from so many of them I would have to repeat most of the IDNIYRA membership list to make sure I cover everyone I should thank. However, like many DN sailors, I spend most of my days on the ice scrub racing with my local crowd. Scrub racing is where the real learning comes from since you can freely try out different things, exchange boats and bits, find out what works, and, more importantly, what does not. The top names on my thank you list are Jim Grogan, John Harper, and Dick Wollman.

*Continued next page*



I have repeatedly interrogated them after every scrub race for several years now, and they are all still smiling and still answering all my questions.

The most important advice I would give to someone who wants to race DNs is to ask questions, ask a lot of questions. Other DN sailors will be glad to help you, but you generally need to ask, so do not be shy; rattle those questions off. Interrogate the people that you are sailing with but that are faster than you. The second is to get to the ice every chance you can, anytime the conditions safely allow. Do not wait for perfect conditions. If you do, you will not sail much. You learn just as much, if not more, sailing when the ice is rough, or has snow, or is soft, or the wind is too light, or the wind is too heavy as you do when the ice is smooth and hard, and the wind is blowing the perfect 12 knots. There is simply no substitute for time at the tiller.

However, the sailor I must thank the most, in a class by himself, is Ron Sherry. The amount of hard-

earned knowledge he has freely shared with me is incalculable and beyond generous. The only thing I can take credit for is being smart enough to listen to him.

One day, I jokingly scolded Ron after I had been sailing for perhaps a year. After a particularly perfect day on the ice, I approached him, got right in his face, and said, "Ron, I am just so mad at you; how could you be such an ass?" and walked away. He was understandably bewildered by my comment and immediately chased me down, seeking an explanation. I laughed and explained that I had missed out on DN sailing the last thirty years of my life simply because he never picked up the phone to tell me that I had to try sailing a DN. I wish I had started sooner. Now I am just thankful that I started it at all.

Better late than never.

*Eric Smith US2500*

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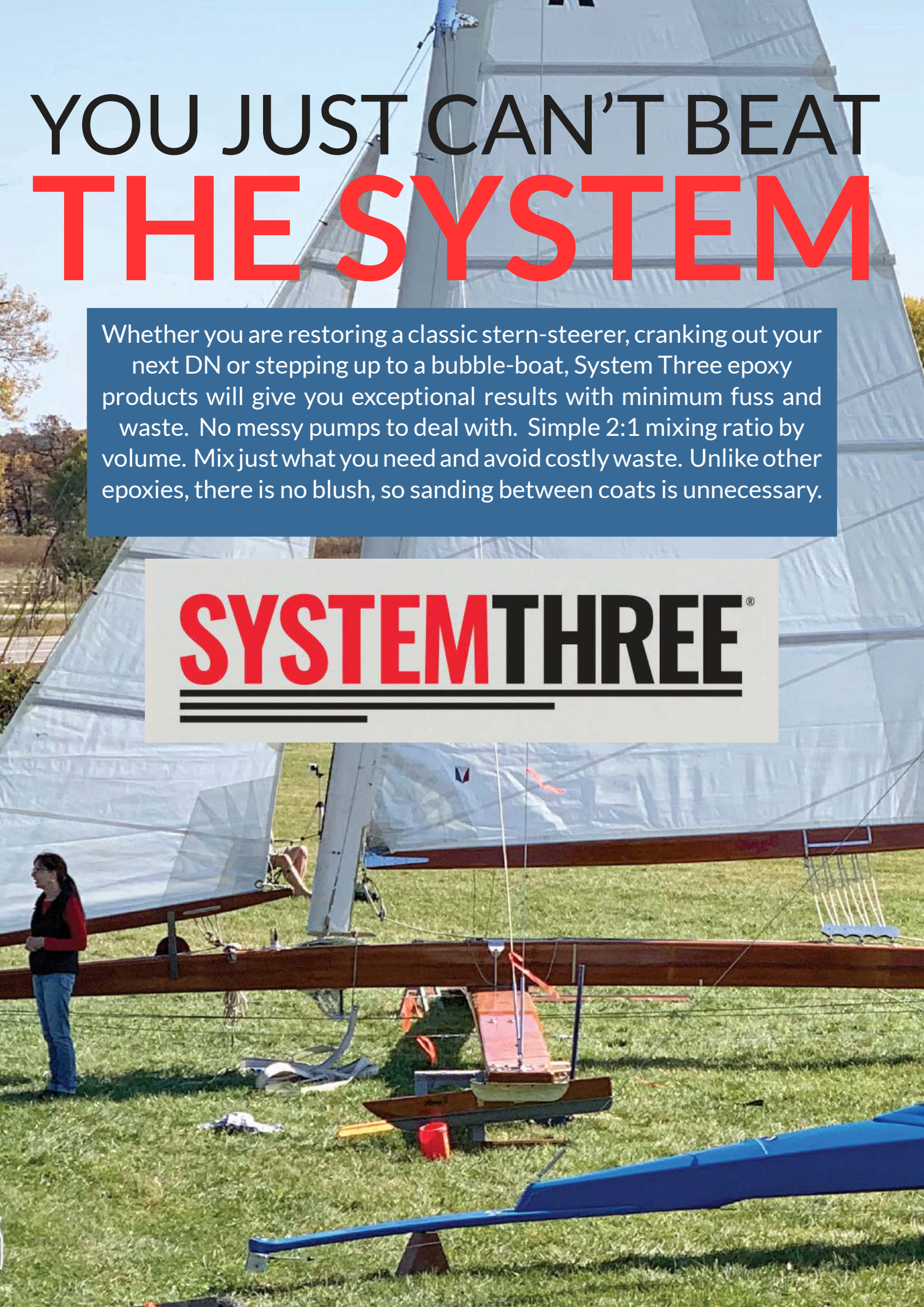
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# ZEN, ADRENALINE & REFLECTION

"FOUR YEARS AGO, I'D NEVER HEARD OF ICEBOATING. NOW, I CAN'T IMAGINE MY LIFE WITHOUT IT. I WILL NEVER QUIT."

2021 U.S. NATIONALS REPORT & OBSERVATIONS BY RHEA NICHOLAS US4783  
BLACK LAKE, ONAWAY, MICHIGAN, JANUARY 26 - 28, 2021

Iztlacolihqui, the Aztec God of Frost, granted the Detroit iceboating community's wishes and led ice scouts to regatta-quality ice in Michigan, near the tip of the mitt on 10,000-acre Black Lake.

On January 23, the International DN Ice Yacht Racing Association (IDNIYRA) Vice Commodore Jody Kjoller US5435 made the call to hold the 2021 DN U.S. Nationals as a one-off, non-ranking regatta in place of the 2021 Gold Cup World Championship and North American Championship. It was the best the iceboating community could do during a pandemic. In 2020, the IDNIYRA Governing Committee made the fair decision to cancel the rank-granting North American Championship and Worlds due to Covid-19 travel restrictions.

Fifty-two registered DN sailors traveled from various spots around the Midwest and the East Coast to safely gather on the Black Lake ice to compete in the world's most exciting, grossly under-followed sport. The elation of sailing across a frozen lake is a feeling like no other.

After the Race Committee announced the site, the Inuit spirit Agloolik smiled upon us, and I found a rental house directly on the lake where we could set up our iceboats and sail to the racecourse. And BONUS, the house included a 24 x 30 heated garage so we could work on our DN equipment. Getting my mind into the race: I have noticed an improved synergy with my new mast and plank. When I am sailing properly, I feel the boat flatten out. Ron Sherry US44 told me, "I want to see you pull block to block tomorrow."

After looking at Gretchen Dorian's photos, I was not. You can compare my pictures with the top Silver

and Gold Fleet sailors. Inevitably, the winners have flattened planks, bent masts, and are sheeted block to block.

For those who don't know Gretchen, she was the first "active" woman member at Bayview Yacht Club (Gretchen Uznis was concomitantly the first female junior). When I asked Gretchen how she became involved in iceboat photography, she said, "In 2007, I was in between jobs. Chris Clark said they needed a photographer for the DN Worlds. I became hooked from there and shot all sorts of iceboat regattas."



*Photographer Gretchen Dorian prepares for a day of filming iceboat racing.*

One thing I love about the sport is the level playing field. There is no gender advantage. In really light air, people who weigh less may have an advantage, but



it is equally important to have good equipment and sailing acumen. We all bring different levels of athleticism, experience, and motivation to the ice. If I had learned to iceboat at 20, I probably would've approached it differently, but I started iceboating at 48 years old! Ron's sister, Loretta Rehe, my Adult Learn to Sail instructor at Crescent Sail Yacht Club, took me to my first iceboat regatta in February 2018, the Nite Nationals on Lake Mendota in Madison, Wisconsin.

### **Tuesday, January 26 - Day One**

Regatta day! I got up before the sun and looked at my iPhone, and it was about 7F with no breath of wind, though my wind apps predicted 5-10 knots.

"ICEBOAT REGATTAS ARE THE MOST UNPREDICTABLE SAILING EVENTS EVER"

ALL ICEBOATERS WHO EVER LIVED

The skippers' meeting was at 9 AM, followed by the first mini-qualifier at 10 AM. During skipper's meetings, Ron often jumps in and gives a safety speech. He stated, "Sometimes people don't see each other. It is always good to let the right of way boat know you see them and plan to avoid them. The worst collisions happen when both boats turn, trying to avoid a collision and end up hitting each other head-on."

Ron Sherry, Griffin Sherry US4, and Matt Koch US111 packed their multiple runners, sails and made their way to the course. The Silver Fleet qualifier was first. The Race Committee uses the international ranking list to split the fleet into Gold and Silver. The top twelve boats who finish in the qualifier move up to the Gold Fleet; thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen counts as first, second, and third in the first Silver fleet results.

I usually bring my ABSS flat sail, but I took a risk after looking at three wind apps and observing the lack of wind on the lake. The apps predicted 5-10 knots, so I hoisted my full FO1 sail and brought a pair of 3/16 (minimum width), light, 90-degree (sharpened edge angle) runners...only. Once I got to the course, the wind blew 15-20 knots (which lightened over the day). I checked in with Ron, saying, "Too much wind for a FO1 sail!" Yes, I knew that. Then he said, "You also have on the wrong runners!"

For the Silver qualifier, I started on starboard towards the left end of the line. I felt a little overpowered in the first race and came in 16th out of 25th. Chris Clark US4789 qualified for Gold. Tom Dawson US5470, Matt Koch, and I stayed in Silver. The Gold Fleet raced next. Ron won the first race and would ultimately have four wins and one second on the first day. Matt Koch didn't have a great day. He came in first on the first race but broke the hound off his mast on the second race and needed repairs. We completed five races for the Silver and five for the Gold fleet on the first day.

*Continued next page*

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Back at the house, I was eager to hear about everyone's day. Tom reported, "We couldn't have asked for a better first day of racing. The day started with breeze on, which moderated during the day. At some time, I changed to my lighter air sail. It was a great day of racing, and my boat was in one piece, which is a new experience for me." With four wins,

"ROUNDING A MARK AT 40 KNOTS IS A KICK IN THE PANTS."

RHEA NICHOLAS, RON SHERRY WANNABE

Ron was all smiles, so it was a good time to ask him about his day as well. Ron shared the details of his third race, "I had a good start but with the light wind and left shift, I found myself aimed down at the transoms of all the boats that started to the left of me. I looked across to the right side, and the boats that started on port looked like they had a lot more pressure. So, I tacked across to the right side. When I tacked, I found myself on a terrible angle and in a light air that seemed to follow me across the course to the starboard tack layline. Not only was I behind all the boats that started on port tack, the boats that continued on starboard tack after the start found more pressure and were in front of me as well. I was in about twentieth place at the first weather mark. I played the right side on the first downwind leg, kept my air clear, and passed several boats. On the second beat, I played the right side hard. I overstood a little to protect my air coming into the second weather mark with speed. Boats that tacked short paid the price trying to do two more racks in light air. On the second downwind leg, I played the right side again passed more boats. Surprisingly I found myself in 5th place at the second leeward mark. I remember saying to myself, you are in a great spot. Fifth is great compared with

where I was, so don't do anything stupid. T (James "T" Thieler US5224) had a big lead, and I was having a hard time keeping my air clear on Chris Berger US5166, Eric Smith US2500, and Griffin Sherry. I couldn't take it anymore, so I tacked across the middle, and when I tacked back to come into the weather mark, I found myself in second place. I was thrilled to be following T downwind and was back talking to myself. Don't do anything stupid; follow T; second is fine. Again I didn't listen to myself, and I jibed across the middle. When I got to starboard tack layline, I jibed back and headed to the finish. I ended up beating T across the finish line by just a few boat lengths. What a race!"

### Wednesday, January 27 - Day Two

I put my 3/16s runners on and hoisted my ABSS. The racecourse was 3 miles away from our rental house, and I had to push the boat through a rugged Martian landscape before I could sail.

Hurry up and wait. The Race Committee had to change the course because of a wind shift. The wind appeared to be light, so I switched to my full sail. We completed three races in Silver and three in Gold today.

I was mediocre. It wasn't Griffin's best day either. Ron had a first, a third, and a third in the Gold Fleet. Chris Clark didn't do so well but didn't seem to care. He has repeatedly said, "He is in the old man's cruising class. It is all about having fun, and that's what I did!" Matt Koch came back and had a phenomenal day with a first, third, and a first. He also had a fantastic spin-out right at the leeward mark in front of God and everyone when he eased the sheet a little too much after finishing the race. The boat became unstable, turned in an unexpected direction, causing him to fall out of the boat. His knees took the tiller hard to the left as he came out, resulting in a

*Continued on page 20*



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hard spin to the right that sent him flying. Lucky for him, he and the boat were wholly uninjured, and even better, the boat spun around into the wind and stopped. Things could've been much worse. For your pleasure, Cathy Firmbach was in the pits and managed to get quite the photo.

### Thursday, January 28 - Day Three

I finally felt ready to sail. I felt good today. I brought both sails but hosted my ABSS Speed sail and put on my 3/16 runners. The Gold fleet raced first in 9-12 knots. After the first race, the wind built to 12-15 knots. I started the race on starboard (position 14 on the left). Off we went! I tacked early on, speeding to the right side of the course. I didn't want to overstand the mark, tacked, and HOLY TOLEDO! Swirls of white lifted into the air; white, icy sand hurled towards me like 100,000 snakes. The wind was howling, picking up to 20-25 knots. Now that is the top end of my wind limit, but for some reason, I was in the mood and loved it today. I had the right sail on and felt in control. I knew that rounding the weather mark would be challenging in

"AS SOON AS I WAKE UP AND BRUSH MY TEETH, I JUST GET EXCITED TO GO OUT AND SAIL WITH FRIENDS."

IDNIYRA COMMODORE JODY KJOLLER

this wind and reminded myself to stay fast; don't ease the sail. Stay in control; you can always head down. I expected to "take off," but I was flying! My head flew back with a lot of force, but I dare not take my hands off the tiller to hold my chin guard down to relieve pressure on my neck. I whizzed past all the spirals blowing downwind, at least three times their speed. The wind was shifting even more, so I scooted forward and jibed, flying straight to the leeward mark. I passed a lot of boats that went wide in the typical diamond formation. I probably could've passed more boats, but I wimped out again. I was going so fast; I didn't want to stay "high and hot" like T always stressed but headed down instead. I was going fast enough and wanted to slow down a little before I rounded the leeward mark. If people are going to spin out, that's where they do it.

I thought of what Dr. John Harper US80 told me a while back. It struck me as funny, over a cocktail, not

when you speed 55 mph towards the leeward mark. John said, "Get around the leeward mark, scoot forward. Nothing worse than a pile of firewood at the leeward mark. It ruins your day and everyone else's. I have done that before." I followed John's advice, rounded a couple more times, and came in tenth.

After Jody Kjoller called the regatta complete, based on the fact that we had nine races in per fleet and the wind was building to a steady 20 knots, with puffs to 30, Griffin suggested that he and Ron do a hot lap. As they went to the starting line, most of the Gold Fleet joined them. All the Gold Fleet sailors wanted to test out their equipment and themselves in the big breeze. It was a tight race, and Griffin was all smiles after finishing with the leaders.

"The most memorable part was the hot laps. Man, that was really cool. You could barely see anything in the puffs...it was a lot of fun to be competitive." Griffin Sherry

After breaking down our boats, the DN sailors headed back to the Onaway State park parking lot for the awards presentation. Regardless of race placement, smiles were abundant. At nine races per fleet, it was a very successful regatta.

Iceboating has moments of acute tension and other moments that can be downright terrifying. Still, they accompany a solitary peacefulness when you are ripping across the lake at 50 mph, reaching for even more. There is a sense of mindfulness if you enjoy the moment.

*Rhea Nicholas US4783*



Photo: Gretchen Dorian



DNs on the Sea of Japan in Vladivostok, Russia.

Photo: Igor Bessarab

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