

Regata al Sol XXV report

by Guy Brierre

Twenty three boats registered for the 25th running of the bi-annual Regata al Sol, a 555 nautical mile race from Pensacola FL south to Isla Mujeres Mexico, off the Yucatan coast from Cancun. It would turn out to be a tough challenge from Mother Nature as well as the competition. Beating into the wind most of the way, the margin of victory came down to just 5 minutes in the Racing Division and less than 2 minutes in the Cruising Division. Once in Isla Mujeres, a great time was had by all with daily parties, a basketball game against the local team and an Awards banquet sponsored by the Governor of the Quintana Roo province featuring native dancing, food, drink and merriment.

In the racing division, hard luck befell Stephen Murray's TP52 Decision before the start as the boat struck an uncharted underwater obstruction on the delivery from New Orleans to Pensacola. This left 22 starters, up from just 14 in 2004. One racing boat dismasted within 3 hours of the start in a squall just outside of Pensacola, one went in to Tampa with problems, one went into Key West when they gave up fighting the current and one, within 150 miles of the finish, turned around and came home, an 800 mile round tripper. Eighteen boats eventually made it to Isla with 12 of those finishing.

For the first time we had transponders mounted to each boat so people could follow along on their computers, a really fun aspect added to the race. It was so popular that racers would hit the

dock, grab a cold beer and neglect their sweet smelling wife or girlfriend until they could rehash the race on the race tracker. (On a sad note, as we go to press we learned of a boat in the Galveston to Vera Cruz race who lost their keel and one

crewmember drowned in the overturned hull. The good news was that the transponder helped the Coast Guard locate and rescue the remaining five crewmembers,



clinging to just four life jackets.)

SYC had a very good showing, especially considering the decimation of our big-boat fleet just three years ago. SYC had 6 boats entered; Mad Max II, the venerable J/120 skippered by Jerry Carney, with Benz Faget and Guy Brierre aboard, won the Madden Randle Trophy for first in IRC, a new trophy donated by Steve and Stephen Murray in honor of Madden, a half-hull model of the Andrews 70 Decision, the current record-holder in the Regata al Sol. Mad Max had an epic battle with Greg Smith's White Trash from Fairhope, being

across the line by 27 minutes but only having a 22 minute lead at the finish. Carney and crew also won the Commodore Mateos Trophy for fastest elapsed time and the Mississippi Bank trophy for first Racing boat hailing from Mississippi.

Lunami, Celeste Roman's Beneteau 40.7, was co-skippered by Devon Sweeney and Kett Cummins, finishing 2nd in IRC and 3rd in PHRF. Awarded the Aztec Warrior trophy for first Louisiana boat in Racing class, the crew included SYC's Paul McKee, Jimmy Cain, Mike Finn and Scott Mason.

Tiare, the beautiful red Cal 48 skippered by Bill Provensal, won the Racing Division's best menu award and finished 5th in Racing PHRF with a nearly all-SYC crew of Commodore Bill Wright, Dwight LeBlanc, Steve Salzer, Peter Sladovich, Chris Schrammel, Bruce Hayden and Cal Herman Jr. Lady Gray, the brand new Beneteau 49 co-skippered by Bob Hughes and Howard Leach finished 2nd in Cruising Non-Spinnaker with SYC crew of Bill Meyers, Chris Wilke, Mike Guiza and Rob Hughes. Unscripted, Lance Rydberg's Tartan 42 won the Turtle award for the longest elapsed time of any finisher, finishing 3rd in cruising spinnaker.



PHOTO BY JULIE BEAN

The Cruising Division winner came down to the winners of the Spinnaker (PCYC member Steve Montagnet's Fidelis II) and Non-Spinnaker (Pensacola YC's Tim Burr's Alegria) classes, with Alegria winning by just 1 minute 25 seconds after nearly five and a half days of racing.

in site of the Olson 40 for 80% of the race and exchanging the lead at least 5 times boat-for-boat. Unfortunately for the Mad Max crew they finished second in PHRF scoring by just 5 minutes after 106 hours of racing, needing to beat White Trash

Other SYC Members: Peter Hopkins Jr sailed with Tom Stokes' Free Spirit (4th Racing PHRF and 3rd IRC) and Jay Williams sailed on Steve Montagnet's Fidelis II.