

FROSTBITE SAILING BEGINS ON RIVER

By Jerome Wilson
Special to the Times

It was unseasonably warm last Sunday, but there was plenty of cold and wind on the water for the opening day of the shoreline's frostbite racing series. Thirty sailboats of four different classes took to the waves in the Frostbite Yacht Club's season opener in the waters off Essex harbor in the Connecticut River.

As often happens during these races, several of the boats ran aground, and a few capsized in the frigid waters.

The winning skipper of the Etchells division was Chuck Poindexter of Madison, and Peter Harding of Chester was the winning skipper of the Ideals division.

The classes of sailboats participating in the races, which sailed in four separate divisions, were 30-foot Etchells, 18-foot Ideals, 15-foot JYs

and 14-foot Lasers. There were four races for each of these four divisions. The races began at 1 p.m. and did not finish until 4 p.m. The air temperature on the water during this three-hour period was in the low 40s.

The winning skipper of the Etchells division was Chuck Poindexter of Madison, and Peter Harding of Chester was the winning skipper of the Ideals division. The winning skippers of the JY and Laser divisions were, respectively, Kevin Gilman of Madison and Bob Merrick of Branford.

Three of the Etchells went aground on a sand bar off the eastern shore of the Connecticut River during the races. One of them was able to sail off the bar under its own sail power and con-

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Kim Tyler photo

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tinued racing, although by then it was far behind. The second grounded Etchell had to be pulled off the bar by the Club's high-powered crash boat, owned and piloted by Frostbite Yacht Club Vice Commodore Scott Baker of Chester.

The third Etchell that ran aground could not be pulled off the sand bar, even after valiant efforts by the crash boat. Therefore, it had to be left in place until the next high tide, many hours later. Eventually, it returned to base on shore.

The Lasers, which were the smallest boats in the races, are sailed single-handed, which means

they have a crew of one. Lasers are also very tender, meaning that they can capsize very easily.

In fact, the Commodore of the Frostbite Yacht Club, Doug McDonald of Lyme, tipped over his Laser during one of the races. However, he quickly

righted the boat, by jumping on its centerboard, and sailed on without a great loss of time. McDonald came in third in the Laser division.

One of the FY 15s, however, pulled out of the races after it tipped over, because the crew was simply too cold after their dunking.

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