



IC DINGHIES at start. Water was calm, breezes were light for Essex season opener on Easter Sunday. Event had been postponed from Sunday prior because of ice on the river and in the launch area.



GETTING READY - Walter Rowe, who was instrumental in founding the Essex frostbite fleet back in 1933, and his daughter Melissa jockey their IC Dinghy after launch.

Big Year At Essex

Frostbiting on the Connecticut River, which had its beginnings back in 1933, is pushing toward the climax of a season that has seen the largest turnouts and hottest competition in recent

The Connecticut River Squadron of the Frostbite Yacht Club is

based at Essex Yacht Club, uses its launches and gear and draws on the club for a fair share of its competitors.

The club itself grew out of frostbite activity back in the at some of the river's best competition on the Sound.

So frostbiting, the Connecticut River and the Essex Yacht Club sort of belong together.

Back in the old days, they sailed X-dinghies. The competitors were Knapp, Rod Stevens, Ducky Bond, Lorna Whittlesey, Bruce and Sherry Fahastock, Jim Robbins, Bill Taylor and Jeff Davis.

Today the fleet at Essex is split between Interclub Dinghies and Blue Jays. The skippers, for the most part are big boat skippers, too, and the competition is sharp.

The Spring series this year began on Easter Sunday and will end on May 7. Racing was to have started the Sunday before Easter, but ice on the River, particularly at the launch area delayed it.

So far this season, the weather has been calm by frostbite standards. There has been only one capsized and no races have been cancelled. But the fleet turnouts have been better than ever and competition is at a peak.

This season, too, has seen the arrival of fiberglass Blue Jays. In the Essex fleet, Don McNair was in first place as of April 16 and Dave Peterson was in third. Both are sailing fiberglass boats.

Boatbuilder McNair is sailing one of his own boats and Peterson is sailing a Blue Jay from Saybrook Yacht Yard which is currently completing about three a week in fiberglass.

This has led to speculation about superior performance of the glass boats.

Among the sailors at Essex, the consensus is that nothing is noted that both McNair and Peterson are red hot sailors.

Standings as of April 16:

Interclubs - Ed Birch of Bloomfield, 1st with 97.6 points; Stan Renchan of Essex, 2nd with 89.2; George Hart of Essex, 3rd, 88.5; Loch Syme - Don Charbonnier, both of Essex, 4th, 85.9.

Blue Jays - Don McNair, Higganum, 1st, 90.0; Dr. Wayne Southwick, New Haven, 2nd, 89.9. Competition the way it is, anything can happen.



MARKERS -- Arthur Libby prepares to drop basket buoy marking one end of starting line.



WITH FINAL SIGNS OF WINTER in foreground, Allen Perrins swabs road dirt and mud from his Ja.

Photos by John Turner





BLUE JAYS just after the start. In all, 19 Jays turned out for the competition. Of the fleet, three boats were fiberglass. They not only attracted attention but performed well and in the words of one observer will be "formidable foes" in the season ahead.



COMMODORE Varrick D. (Rick) Harrison of the Connecticut River Squadron of the Frostbite Yacht Club briefs skippers.



RACE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN B. V. Harrison, Jr. father of the commodore, calls instructions to skippers as they pass dock on way from club to river. For first three Sundays, the race committee operated from long dock which juts out into river from the club. For the remainder of the season they use a conventional committee boat.



IC DINGHY IS LAUNCHED -- Arthur Hamilton (right) owner and skipper gets an assist as he guides Interclub off floating ramp. Throughout preparation period shouts of "free beer" summon willing hands to the task of launching.

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