

2007 El Toro North American Championship

August 10, 2007

PINECREST LAKE, California – Thirty-two boats competed this year in the Senior and Masters Divisions of the 41st El Toro North American Championships. The fleet completed eight races over four days, August 6–9, 2007, with beautiful mountain scenery under cloudless skies, in the shifty, gusty breezes between 5 and 15 knots that make Pinecrest Lake an ideal place to race small dinghies. Simon Bell, an experienced Laser and off-shore sailor from the Richmond Yacht Club, was the principal race officer, with help from his wife and other family members and many other volunteers. Fred Paxton was the regatta chairman and organizer for the event.

In the Senior (open) Division, El Toro veteran Dave Vickland took top honors with 24 points after one throwout, with last year's winner, Paul Tara, taking second, 2 points behind, and relative newcomer, John Pacholski, one point behind in third. Class stalwarts Fred Paxton (4th) and Art Lange (5th) rounded out the top five. The top ten included Bruce Bradfute (6th), Chris Straub (10th), two generations of Nashes (Gordie in 7th and Nick in 9th), and Pinecrest local Rich Bergsund (8th).

In the 9-boat Masters Division (open to anyone wanting to sail one race per day), long-time El Toro wizard Hank Easom won with 6 points, followed by juniors Mackenzie Cook and Patrick Tara in second and third. The Masters Division is new this year (conceived by regatta organizer Fred Paxton), and promises to add sailors to our future start lines who, for physical or other reasons, do not want to compete in a full schedule of North American Championship racing.

The competition at Pinecrest was extremely tight, with six sailors winning at least one race, fourteen sailors having at least one top-5 finish, and tactical and strategic challenges galore. Even the top sailors were challenged by the tricky Pinecrest conditions, with average throwouts of 11th for the top twelve Senior Division finishers. The numerous and often extreme shifts and puffs put a premium on quick decision making, gear-shifting, and boat handling. Boat-speed was often a minor factor.

On July 13th, thirty-three junior El Toro sailors competed in their one-day, three-race North American Championship regatta at the Stockton Sailing Club in Stockton, California. In the Gold Fleet, Patrick Tara won with straight bullets, followed by Mackenzie Cook and Marina Fennell in second and third. The Silver Fleet was won by Peter Lansdale, with second and third going to Dalton Fernandez and Jesse Kittle. The Junior North Americans were held in conjunction with the annual, week-long, junior summer sailing camp run by the Stockton Sailing Club, the Santa Cruz Yacht Club and the Richmond Yacht Club. Fred Paxton served as the principal race officer, with lots of help from camp instructors and parents. The weather was ideal for the event, with morning winds between 8 and 15 knots and lighter afternoon breezes of 4 to 8 knots. For many of the sailors, the regatta was their first formal racing event. All of sailors had a lot to be proud of.

Final standings and pictures for both regattas are posted.

Although final arrangements are not yet in place, it looks like the 2008 Junior North Americans will once again be held at Stockton as part of the annual junior sailcamp in mid-July, and the 2008 Senior and Masters North Americans will be held at Huntington Lake Monday, August 4 through Thursday, August 7. Check the class website soon for details, including information about lodging and camping at Huntington.