



A National Champion: The Stars Aligned and a Dream Came True!

By Keith Bennett

2022 Catalina 22 National Champion and Spinnaker Fleet Champion

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Race Committee, Hal and Sally Smith, Ted and Dora McGee, the Ft. Walton Yacht Club and all of the volunteers that worked so hard to make this a great regatta. I also want to thank Terry, Lynn, and Todd Garner for their hospitality and allowing us to stay in their Boathouse for the week which is right next to the club.

I especially want to thank Justin Chambers and Doug Thome for crewing for me and putting us in a position to win the regatta. They are awesome sailors and after sailing with them all week I see why they have won so many championships. They definitely have the "right stuff".

As most of you know, my wife Jennifer always sails with me and this was the only one she has missed since 2001. Unfortunately, she had a conflict this year. I would have loved for her to have been a part of this.

Finally, I have to thank my mentor and best friend Mickey Richardson, a two-time National Champion himself. He took me under his wing about 30 years ago and taught me everything I know about sailboat racing. This would have never been possible without him. Thanks, again my friend!!

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I attended my first National Regatta 26 years ago in 1996 at Eagle Mountain Lake in Texas. As I recall there were 64 boats of which over 50 were in the Gold Fleet. I finished 17th and felt pretty good. Since then, Jennifer and I have attended 16 National Regattas. Over that time period I have had three second-place finish, three fourth place finishes, one fifth-place finish, and four finishes in the top ten. My worst finish was the 17th in 1996 and that was before Jennifer joined the “Screamin” crew.

Every year since 2001 I always felt we had a chance to win. And every year we came up a little short. Usually due to the dummy driving the boat. As Jennifer got better and gained more understanding of tactics I became more and more confident every year it was going to be our year. But we seemed to always come up a little short. However, we always had a great time and never once doubted we would be back the next year. This year it finally paid off. Sometimes the stars align just right and everything falls into place.

Day 1 the wind was blowing 10-15 and I was a little concerned we might struggle. Thanks to good coaching from Justin and excellent trimming from Doug we managed to keep the boat and always moving forward for two first-place finishes and a second.



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Photographs by

CeCe Stoldt

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Day 2 was a little different. The wind was light and no one was able to separate from the fleet. We continued to work hard and managed to pull out a 2nd and a 3rd. It was an exhausting day.

Day 3 we only had one race which was rescheduled for later in the day. The sea breeze came in at around 10 knots and it was a gorgeous day. Again, we worked hard and managed to get a 1st.

All week long I told myself, “don’t think about winning the regatta and take it one race at a time.” Now it is Wednesday night and we are leading by six points with one race to go. I was lying in bed running all the numbers and combinations and probably didn’t get 2 hours sleep. I was up at 5am and still thinking about the numbers. When Doug gets up, I start to talk about it and he says “we’re not gonna talk about sailing”. He obviously recognized I was a little nervous. That ended that conversation.



Day 4 we go out for the final race and it is light wind. Again, we are working hard to get around the course. Everyone is doing well and there are boats all over the course on opposite tacks. The wind is beginning to die and the Race committee decides to shorten at the weather mark the second time up. We round the leeward mark and there is only one boat ahead of us. That is when I breathe a sigh of relief and realize that after 26 years I have finally reached my goal of winning the Catalina 22 National Championship Regatta.

We also won the Spinnaker Fleet which was the second time for Doug and I. He, Jennifer, and I won that in 2016 in Portland. We managed to get three first-place finishes and one second-place finish. It was mostly light winds every day except Monday.

It has been a long journey but also one of the most enjoyable of my life. Jennifer and I have made so many friends along the way and have enjoyed every minute of it. I turned 64 this year and was 38 when I attended my first National Regatta. In all honesty, over the last few years I was beginning to think my time was running out and it may not ever happen. But I never gave up. There is one thing I knew for certain, and that was if I didn’t continue to pursue my goal it definitely was not going to happen. So I want to encourage everyone to never lose sight of your goals, whether it be sailing or anything else in life, because one day the stars may well align in your favor just as they did for me.

Once again, thank you to all my friends in the Catalina 22 fleet and sailing community for the memories and I’m looking forward to many, many more.



Catalina 22 2022 National Championship Fort Walton Yacht Club

By Ted McGee

The Catalina 22 sailing vessel was introduced by Catalina Yachts in 1969. The boat was promoted as an affordable family boat that could be towed by many of the cars of the day. It was easy to tow, easy to rig, and easy to sail. It opened the door for many families to enjoy sailing. The Catalina 22 continues to be a popular boat for families. Over the years almost 16,000 Catalina 22 sailboats were manufactured and sold. Surprisingly, many of the original boats are still sailed and compete today.

The Catalina 22 National Sailing Association was formed in 1970. The Catalina 22 National Sailing Association organized sailing activities that promoted family sailing fun. In 1972 the first California State Championship Regatta was held in Mission Bay, California. Forty-five boats competed at that first regatta. It was such a success they decided to make it an annual event, turning it into a national regatta.



Beattie Purcell, legendary among Catalina 22 sailors, was instrumental in building the Catalina 22. Beattie moved his family to Florida in 1977, settling in Fort Walton Beach. Beattie was evaluating Fort Walton Beach for a possible Catalina 22 factory. Brent Purcell, one of Beattie's sons, tells of Beattie flying into Fort Walton Beach the first time. Beattie made up his mind while the plane was flying over the bay and the Gulf waters. Fort Walton Beach would work just fine.

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Beattie was a Catalina 22 National Champion in 1979. Beattie brought many Catalina 22 sailors to Fort Walton Yacht Club and helped establish Catalina 22 Fleet 77. In 1999 Fort Walton Yacht Club started hosting an annual cruise for Catalina 22 sailors. The cruise continues to attract sailors from as far away as Canada.

Fort Walton Yacht Club has hosted five Catalina 22 National Championships, the most recent being 2022. In 2001 Fleet 77 submitted a bid and the Catalina 22 National Regatta went to Fort Walton. It was a huge success with 39 boats competing. In 2009 the national regatta was scheduled for another venue but plans for that fell through and at the last-minute Fort Walton Yacht Club, again, raised their hand, providing another excellent regatta with 36 boats competing. Fort Walton Yacht Club proved so popular the regatta returned in 2013 (30 boats) and 2016 (31 boats), each time drawing boats from across the country.

Fort Walton Yacht Club opened their doors once again for the 2022 Catalina 22 National Championship. John Farris, Fleet Captain at Fort Walton Yacht Club, made sure everything was ready for our arrival. Despite high gas prices competitors arrived from Oklahoma, Washington, Texas, Louisiana, Colorado, Michigan, Arkansas, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. Twenty-two competitors gathered to celebrate this anniversary of the Catalina 22 National Regatta.



PRO Hal Smith led a team of race committee volunteers from the Fort Walton Yacht Club. The Fort Walton Yacht Club race committee team was well trained and prepared. Their efforts provided excellent and uncompromised racing. Temperatures were in the upper 90s all week and the efficiency of the race committee in properly setting up the racecourse, responding to changing conditions, and getting competitors racing was appreciated by all.

Photograph by Peter Buckley

Racing started on Monday, June 20 and concluded Thursday, June 23. Early leads were established in all three fleets. Keith

Bennett, sail #221, won the race in Spinnaker Fleet. Mark Heinold, sail #7436, won all three of Monday's races in Silver Fleet. The National Champion is the winner of Gold Fleet and Keith Bennett, sail #221, took a commanding lead in the first two races on

Monday with two bullets. The third race Monday was won by Gene Cochran, sail #38, leaving an open door to determine the National Champion.

Keith Bennett won the Spinnaker Fleet race again on Tuesday. With only two races left in Spinnaker Fleet racing Keith all but guaranteed the regatta win in the Spinnaker Fleet. Mark Heinold extended his lead in Silver Fleet with two more wins. The first race Tuesday saw Gene Cochran finishing first, then Chip Embrey, sail #241, taking the win in the second race.

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Two Spinnaker Fleet races took place on Wednesday, with Keith Bennett winning the first race and Patrick Dorsch, sail #7707, winning the second race. Overall, Keith Bennett won the Spinnaker Fleet at the National Regatta. Mark Heinold won the only Silver Fleet race of the day and Keith Bennett won the only Gold Fleet race of the day.



There was one race in Silver and Gold Fleets left to run on Thursday, June 23, the last day of the regatta. Mark Heinold won the 7th and last race in Silver Fleet, becoming the Silver Fleet Champion. David Hayslip, sail #197, won the last race in Gold Fleet, but it wasn't enough to overcome the commanding lead Keith Bennett had built up throughout the regatta. Keith Bennett (picture left) became the National Champion of the Catalina 22 National Sailing Association for 2022.

During the awards ceremony, Catalina 22 Commodore Duncan McBride presented racing trophies for the top three finishers in each fleet.

Awards were also given to:

- ◆ Don Woodhouse for traveling the Longest Distance
- ◆ Stephanie Victa was the Newest Racer
- ◆ Tom Winans for the Sandy Kennedy Spirit Award
- ◆ Stuart Weist for the Leadership award
- ◆ Michelle Weist for the Best MainBrace Article
- ◆ Jim Slosson for Best Video
- ◆ Mike McCaffrey for Best Photograph
- ◆ Mark Goodwin for Region Commodore of the Year
- ◆ Katie McBride for Sportsmanship
- ◆ Liz and Eric McCafferty for Cruising Family of the Year
- ◆ Grace Purcell won the Youth Sailing Award
- ◆ Katie McBride won the Betty Gay Clemens Award for the highest women's placing skipper.



The Catalina 22 sailors are always treated well at Fort Walton Yacht Club and this year was no exception. It is a venue we always look forward to visiting. Phenomenal sailing, warm friendly people, and fine weather make for an always rewarding experience. Echoing Beattie Purcell's sentiments, Fort Walton Yacht Club works just fine.

Photographs by

CeCe Stoldt



Place	Skipper	Sail #	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	Total
1	Keith Bennett	221	1	1	2	2	3	1	2	12
2	Gene Cochran	38	5	3	1	1	4	2	3	19
3	David Hayslip	197	3	2	6	5	2	3	1	22
4	Chip Embrey	241	2	4	4	3	1	4	6	24
5	Bo Scott	45	7	8	12	4	5	5	5	46
6	Mickey Richardson	8	8	5	3	7	12	8	9	52
7	Patrick Dorsch	7707	13	6	11	6	6	7	10	59
8	Richard Gailey	216	6	7	8	10	10	6	12	59
9	Sam Beckman	73	15	13	5	9	9	12	4	67
10	Yanic Harel	269	4	10	11	17	14	9	7	72
11	Brent Purcell	992	9	10	9	14	7	13	11	73
12	Don Woodhouse	204	12	12	7	12	8	10	16	77
13	Chuck Atkinson	1242	10	9	13	8	13	11	13	77
14	Duncan McBride	178	14	14	15	11	11	14	15	94
15	Mike Parrow	12947	16	15	14	13	15	17	14	104
16	James Hodson	2612	11	16	16	15	17	15	17	107
17	George Yerger	9162	18	18	18	16	16	16	8	110



Gold Fleet First Place

Skipper:
Keith Bennett

Crew:
Justin Chambers
Doug Thome

Presenter:
Dora McGee

Gold Fleet Second Place

Skipper:
Gene Cochran

Crew:
Todd Garner
Terry Garner

Photographs by

CeCe Stoldt



Gold Fleet Third Place

Skipper:
David Hayslip

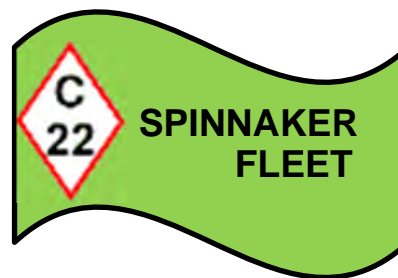
Crew:
Mitch Bullock
Clinton Johnson

Presenter:
Dora McGee





Place	Skipper	Sail #	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	Total
1	Mark Heinold	7436	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
2	Robert Edmond	242	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	16
3	Katie McBride	160	3	3	3	2	3	4	2	20
4	Anthony Woodall	179	5	5	4	4	4	3	5	30



Place	Skipper	Sail #	R1	R2	R3	R4	Total
1	Keith Bennett	221	1	1	1	2	5
2	Patrick Dorsch	7707	3	5	3	1	12
3	Bo Scott	45	2	2	2	8	14
4	Don Woodhouse	204	5	3	5	3	16
5	Gene Cochran	38	4	4	4	8	20
6	Chuck Atkinson	1242	6	6	6	4	22
7	George Yerger	9162	7	7	8	8	30



Silver Fleet First Place

Skipper:
Mark Heinold

Crew:
Peter Buckley
Peter Heinold

Silver Fleet Second Place

Skipper:
Robert Edmond

Crew:
William Edmond
Edward Loewenstein



Photographs by

CeCe Stoldt



Silver Fleet Third Place

Skipper:
Katie McBride

Crew:
Jim Covey

Presenter:
Dora McGee



Spinnaker Fleet First Place

Skipper:
Keith Bennett

Crew:
Justin Chambers
Doug Thome

Presenter:
Dora McGee

Spinnaker Fleet Second Place

Skipper:
Patrick Dorsch

Crew:
Garrett Rogner
Mike Earl
Stephanie Victa

Presenter:
Dora McGee



Spinnaker Fleet Third Place

Skipper:
Bo Scot

Crew:
Mike Kirschner
Tony Cellamare

Presenter:
Dora McGee

