



IDA LEWIS DISTANCE RACE: A TRIUMPH IN TRYING TIMES

AUGUST 18, 2020

In Sporty Winds, Privateer, Zingara, Masquerade, Warrior Won and Alchemist Win Trophies

A total of 65 boats started the 2020 [Ida Lewis Distance Race](#) presented by [Jeanneau America](#) on Saturday, August 15 in a building northeasterly that dished out 20-22 knots of breeze (and a few knock-down gusts) throughout most of the day and into the evening and overnight. By the time racing had finished for two offshore classes (IRC and PHRF Doublehanded) and three inshore classes (PHRF Aloha, PHRF Coronet and PHRF Cruising Spinnaker), 16 boats had retired; however, plenty of teams were left to beam about their accomplishments, each one crossing the finish line in Newport Harbor, near where they started, and receiving – no matter what the hour – a congratulatory bottle of Zardetto Prosecco delivered to them on the water by Ida Lewis Yacht Club volunteers.

“The conditions were incredible,” said Ron O’Hanley (Boston, Mass.), skipper of the Cookson 50 *Privateer*, which decidedly won **PHRF Coronet Class**, taking home both the Lime Rock Trophy for best corrected time and the Lois J. Muessel Memorial Trophy for best elapsed time among that class’s 21 entries. “On races like this, you just have to make sure nothing goes wrong. You have to make sure your tacks and jibes and spinnaker takedowns go right.”



Clockwise from left: Winners Privateer, Zingara and Warrior Won. (Photos by Stephen R. Cloutier)

O’Hanley had originally signed up for the IRC class (which sailed the “Montauk Course” of 169 nautical miles), but while the forecast “was terrific for *Privateer* and its core crew,” it promised to be too challenging for three of O’Hanley’s novice guests, and he switched gears to sail the newly added inshore course of 33 nautical miles (around Conanicut, Prudence and Patience Islands in Narragansett Bay). “Fortunately, we were able to renew our PHRF certificate, change to the Narragansett Bay course, and still give our guests a taste of offshore sailing while doing so safely. Our guests are hooked!”

O’Hanley said he found the inshore course to be different than any other that has been typically held in the Bay and feels it allowed a lot of people to sail who otherwise wouldn’t have been able to, especially those who had to sail with fewer crew in order to stay with those in their social bubbles. “Everyone’s idea of distance racing is different. For our crew, we’re used to 100-mile races, but for others ten miles is as much as they’ve done. I give the Ida Lewis Yacht Club and its Race Committee so much credit for adding formats to ensure COVID safety and draw more participants into distance racing. I recognize that it’s complicated for the Race Committee to run so many different courses, but Ida Lewis has always sought ways to make distance racing more inclusive, and 2020 was yet another high-water mark.”

Winning the 13-boat **PHRF Aloha Class** and the Arthur Curtiss James Trophy for best corrected time was the 45’ wooden yawl *ZINGARA*, owned by Mike McAllister (Providence, R.I.) and skippered by Bill Haynie (Newport, R.I.), who is her listing agent. “She’s my favorite all-time boat: beautiful and surprisingly fast. We managed to get around efficiently and not break anything. We beat all the modern boats, and we did it with style.” Haynie said he wasn’t considering the event until he heard about the

inshore option. “It was a home run for health and safety rules and so much fun, especially because of the wind.”

Also sailing the inshore course was **PHRF Cruising Spinnaker Class** with eight boats. Winner *Masquerade*, a Baltic 47 co-skipped by Newport’s Peter Gerard and Andy Burton. “It was spectacular,” said Gerard. “We had 400 years of experience in a crew of seven people. It was tough conditions, but a great test, and we’re all very sore.”

Winning the six-boat offshore **IRC Class** and the Russell J. Hoyt and Commodore’s Trophies for best elapsed and corrected time (respectively) in IRC was the Pac 52 *Warrior Won*, skippered by Chris Sheehan (Larchmont, N.Y.). “We’ve put quite a bit of time into boat handling and sail design since last October, said Collin Leon, the boat’s captain. “There have been lots of cancellations of sailboat racing but our training has paid dividends.” During the downwind start *Warrior Won*’s spinnaker was up and hauling 15 seconds before the boat hit the line. “We were ripping,” said Leon, describing the first downwind leg to Point Judith. “*Aurora* (which eventually retired) was close behind, but we had a few miles on them by Montauk. By then we weren’t really focused on anyone else except ourselves. Our primary focus is offshore distance racing. This was more-or-less the perfect distance and the perfect breeze.”

The 17-boat **Doublehanded Class**, which sailed the 153 nm “Block Island Course”, was won by the Jeanneau Sun Fast 3300 *Alchemist*, sailed by Ken Read and Suzy Leech (Newport). This team also took first among three Mixed (Co-ed) Doublehanded crews. This category was included in a nod to a new such class at the 2024 Olympics.

“It was spectacular and hard,” said Read, “but that’s why we race,” Read and Leech had to deal with an hourglass in their spinnaker at the start, taking it down to unwrap it and losing precious time. “Everyone had their problems, but we just had the biggest one,” said Read. “We recovered in one piece, which was important, since that was our only full-sized spinnaker and we could use it again.”

On the final approach to Buzzards Bay Tower, Read and Leech trailed by two miles behind the Figaro 3 *Fearless*, another Mixed Doublehanded entry sailed by Jesse Fielding (Newport, R.I.) and Francesca Clapcich (Park City, Utah) of State Street Marathon Sailing Team. The *Alchemist* crew got its break on the second long run to Block Island when they decided to break towards the coast while *Fearless* continued offshore. The move put them in more wind pressure and allowed *Alchemist* to pass *Fearless*. “We were surprised as anybody,” said Read, “because if *Fearless* was going to have conditions that were theirs, this was it. Downwind their foils just must have lit up!”

Though it was the second Mixed Doublehanded team across the line behind *Alchemist*, *Fearless* wound up third among the Mixed teams after rating handicaps were applied and fifth overall in Doublehanded Class. Taking second in Mixed and second overall in Doublehanded Class was 24-year-old Serena Vilage and teammate Peter Becker on the J/105 *Young American-146*, entered by Rye, N.Y.’s Young American Sailing Academy. They corrected out only 28 minutes behind *Alchemist*, while the Collegiate team of Tom Hickey/Will Mckeig (Weymouth, Mass.), sailing their Figaro 2 *Vicitan*, took third overall and claimed the William Tuthill Collegiate Trophy for their performance.

The William Tuthill Collegiate Trophy also was awarded to the *Das Blau Max* team aboard the Farr 30 of the same name in PHRF Coronet Class (eighth place); skippering was Cory Sertl (Jamestown, R.I.). Winning the Arent H. Kits van Heyningen Trophy for top Youth Challenge performance was Brian Gallagher/Cullen Zelenka (Oyster Bay, N.Y.) sailing *Oakcliff Shorthanded Racing* in Doublehanded Class (ninth place).

Warrior Won, with the offshore fleet's fastest elapsed time of 17 hours, 8 minutes and 15 seconds, crossed the finish line at 4:13 a.m. Sunday morning. The next two to finish were the Reichel/Pugh 42 *Rikki*, sailed by Bruce Chafee (Boston, Mass) in IRC Class, at 9:39 a.m. (third place) and the Class 40 *GryphonSolo2*, sailed by Joe Harris and Rob Windsor (Hamilton, Mass.) to line honors in Doublehanded Class, soon after at 9:43 (sixth place). The bulk of the inshore fleet finished between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Saturday.

"With winds gusting to 30 knots and a steep wave pattern making for a lot of slamming upwind and a wild ride downwind, it was a great test of seamanship and boat-handling," summed up *GryphonSolo2*'s Joe Harris. "We had a great battle with *Alchemist* (changing leads with them three times), and we saw many boats retire. It was a credit to all who finished in the tough conditions."