



Above: The crew of *Aryeto* — 'Our shared goal: to have fun and to win'. A second place overall in Cruising Class was won, and fun was emphatically had

Right: Winning skipper in Racing Class, Jack Bishop, rises as the last case of Cruzan rum tips the scale

BACK WITH GUSTO!

by Ellen Birrell

Wavering a bit in recent years, and postponed from its normal February time-slot to November 9th through 11th, 2012, the St. Croix International Regatta is back with gusto! As Terry Merrigan of Gold Coast Yachts put it, "The best party St. Croix Yacht Club has ever thrown!"

He might have been referring to the incredible Saturday night bash with *Cruzan* Kurt Schindler and Kiki and the *Flaming Gypsies*, but that can also be said of the entire regatta. Some things get sweeter with age. St. Croix's International Regatta's 20th year was three days brim-filled with racing, fun and festivities.

My husband, Jim, and I arrived in *Boldly Go* at Teague Bay in time for the Thursday night welcome party. We were there to crew and party. As in other windward bays, the bouncy water conveyed its excitement for the regatta ahead.

Each morning, a complimentary breakfast buffet burgeoning with hard-boiled eggs, bagels, cream cheese, and fresh fruits, was further embellished when Norma Jean arrived with trays of homemade turnovers. Competitors were powered up, ready to hit the course.

I joined a diverse crew aboard the *Creekmore 30 Aryeto*. Dedrick Luikens, ER doctor and new owner; Chandra Henderson, local genoa trimmer extraordinaire; David Flaherty, winning International 14 and Etchells skipper in his day, who was recovering from a stroke; young "never-evers" trying their hand at racing for the first time; and I, a dinghy racer, were led by skipper Tony Sanpere, winner of numerous Caribbean and East Coast regattas over the decades. Six boats ranging from a J/24 to a Hunter 386 composed our CSA Cruising class. Jim Kloss's S2 7.9, *Ambivalence*, the only boat in our class flying a spinnaker, was the one to beat.

Our shared goal: to have fun and to win. For trim Tony, being a *winningest* skipper is a heavy burden, though it doesn't seem to weigh him down. At 72, and just recuperated from knee surgery, he pointed to his right shoulder and joked, "See this bicep?" he flexed his right arm, "It was torn from the shoulder. So, this arm doesn't work, and my left elbow doesn't work so well, but my new knees, they are great!" He

extended his arms and showed me a deep knee squat. Well, let's call it a *demi-plié*. He was all smiles for the races to come. Still searching and coaxing for additional crew at the Thursday night pre-regatta party: "Bring Jim — we need more rail meat. I want you on foredeck. I'll have the rest of them hiking out like they never have before. Some of them won't want to do it. But, it is necessary. It is one of the differences between who wins and loses." He went on to tell me in great detail the dynamics of flattening the boat and adjusting the weight fore and aft for boat speed. Tony is a man of precision. "I am a great driver and tactician. I could be a professional, but I choose to do this. I love to teach others."

According to George "Moose" Silver of *Bold Venture II*, "St. Croix is the home of trimarans. We are world renowned for building multihulls. With no engines, triamarans began replacing island tourism sloops in the mid-Sixties." A man in love with the magic, he continued, "Once you go trimaran, it is as close to flying as you can get. Why go through the water, when you can fly above it?"

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On the Course

Twenty-five boats participated, hailing from Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, the USA, Tortola and St. Croix. Bob Phillips of Doyle Sails, Tortola, headed the race committee. Windward/leeward courses set between the reef-strewn northeast coast of St. Croix and nearby Buck Island with its white sand beaches and marine park made the first two days' races scenic as well as exciting. The CSA Cruising and Multihull



ELLEN SANPERE (2)

Windward/leeward courses were scenic as well as exciting

Classes were treated to a cruising course on the Sunday, which took us west to Christiansted Harbor.

Some unique things happened, according to Ellen Sanpere of the race committee: "It was our first-ever successful kiteboard start after many attempts. Even the dolphins came out and brought their children. Two Holmbergs graced the race course — CSA President Peter on *Bad Girl*, and brother John on *Puppy Too*."

Mother Nature cooperated. Starting with moderate easterly winds on the Friday, she puffed more powerfully on the Saturday, and threw in her fiercest current. *Ambivalence's* tactician, John Kloss, who'd flown down from the Great Lakes, said, "In all my years of racing, I've never experienced such strong current anywhere!" By the Sunday, the wind had backed to the north, finishing with a finale of brisk north-easterly wind.

NOT Your Ordinary Prizegiving

The prizegiving was a love-fest for St. Croix's "Saint" Nicholas, as St. Croix Yacht Club's commodore Charles Fischer called him. "Would everyone who has ever sailed with Nick Castruccio come forward?" Fischer beckoned, and a crush of men, women and children pressed in against the stage. The large number of kids crowing on keelboats, especially *Paladin*, *Bad Girl* and *Annick II*, is Castruccio's legacy.

Castruccio, founder and promoter, originated the regatta in 1992. He and Rob Armstrong secured Mumm's Champagne as key sponsor. Born as "Mumm's Cup International Regatta", 69 boats competed, and Peter Holmberg/*Team Heineken*, the overall winner, received his weight in champagne.

The first two years, Castruccio helped run the race committee and made sure the regatta ran smoothly. For the past decade, Frederiksted Community Boating, a non-profit youth sailing program on the west end of the island, has been his passion. He encourages local youngsters to get involved and then, when they outgrow Optimists, keeps them engaged by inviting them to join him in larger yacht racing adventures.

There was also special admiration and thanks given to Karen Stanton and Julie San Martin, who successfully revived the 2012 regatta after it was cancelled in February.

Continuing, Fischer said, "We're in the business of developing junior sailors. They are the future of the sport." He began by awarding the first-place trophy to *Bad Girl's* crew of youth sailors, skipper Jack Bishop, and the tactician, world champion and CSA President Peter Holmberg. Talk about great mentorship! The *J/100*, provided by the Armstrong family, was followed by Paul Davison on *Magnificent 7* and Morgan

Dale on *Boogaloo*. The Armstrongs also provided a luxurious power cat for the race committee's signal boat.

In the CSA Cruising class, with a string of five bullets, *Ambivalence* took first. *Areyto* was second, and Dave Tomlinson's *El Shaddai II* was third.

With three multihulls competing, Llewellyn Westerman won decisively, with seven bullets, on his Mongoose 37 trimaran *Charis+*, built by his competitor George "Moose" Silver. "They tell me I'm too old to keep winning," Westerman quipped, gripping his artistic (Junie Bomba) conch shell trophy. Silver's newest tri, *Bold Venture II*, took second, and Joe San Martin's *Piglet* took third.

The youthful crew of Peter Stanton's *19ini* swept the tightly raced Rhodes 19 class. Peter won his weight in Cruzan Rum, as did Jack Bishop. (Classes with seven or more boats were rewarded with the skipper's weight in rum.) Beecher Higby on *AVA* took second. Daughter of the regatta's honoree, Cecy Castruccio, took third on *Rhode Hard Barb*.



St. Croix Yacht Club stalwarts Charles Fischer, Julie St. Martin, Nick Castruccio and Karen Stanton

In a roar of applause, competitors shouted, "Let's network and get the word out for next year. Let's get back up to 60 boats again!"

The St. Croix International Regatta: perfect venue, great racing, fabulous volunteers, and fantastic camaraderie. It was sweet the 20th time around.

For full results visit www.yachtscoring.com.

St. Croix International Regatta 2012 Winners

CSA Racing (8 Boats)

- 1) *Bad Girl*, J/100, Jack Bishop, USA - 17
- 2) *Magnificent 7*, J/27, Paul Davis, St. Thomas, USVI - 21
- 3) *Boogaloo*, Melges 24, Morgan Dale, St. Croix, USVI - 22

CSA Cruising (6 Boats)

- 1) *Ambivalence*, S2 7.9, James Kloss, St. Croix, USVI - 9
- 2) *Areyto*, Creekmore 30, Dedrick Luikens, St. Croix, USVI - 14
- 3) *El Shaddai II*, J/24, Dave Tomlinson, New Hampshire, USA - 20

Multihulls (3 Boats)

- 1) *Charis+*, Trimaran 37, Llewellyn Westerman, St. Croix, USVI - 7
- 2) *Bold Venture II*, Mongoose 25, George Silver, St. Croix, USVI - 14
- 3) *Piglet*, Teegull 2300, Joseph San Martin, St. Croix, USVI - 18

Rhodes 19 (One Design - 7 Boats)

- 1) *19ini*, Peter Stanton, St. Croix, USVI - 12
- 2) *AVA*, Beecher Higby, St. Croix, USVI - 31
- 3) *Rhode Hard Barb*, Cecy Castruccio, St. Croix, USVI - 32

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