

CARRIACOU REGATTA FESTIVAL 2012

JUNIOR RACE REPORT: 'OPTIMISTIC FORECAST'

by Ellen Birrell



IT was not a rosy weather forecast for the 2012 Carriacou Regatta. Two days out, the committee organizing the junior races cancelled the Friday's (August 3rd) practice race. By the Thursday night, 50 yachts in Tyrrel Bay ducked into the mangrove lagoon when the US National Hurricane Center's 5:00PM report upgraded TD5 to Tropical Storm Ernesto, tracking one degree farther south as it approached the northern Windward Islands. Facing TD5 before it became a named storm, a band of Bequia Youth Sailors (BYS) had ventured the 30-mile sail south to Carriacou. The group, which included coaches and chaperones, arrived at Hillsborough on a 60-foot catamaran donated by Sunsail Charters. Five Optimists and two 18-foot double-enders were in tow.

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Yachts awaiting regatta watched five Bequia youths skipper their Optimists around the point into Tyrrel Bay. Against late afternoon sun, they looked like tiny translucent specks on the horizon. Pumping to trim their sails under heavy winds, the young



sailors set the tone for the excitement and adept sailing to come. New this year, junior competitors benefited from having their own race committee headed by Ronnie Ramos, 1984 Olympic Soling contender and current Puerto Rican champion youth racing coach.

TS Ernesto passed well north of Carriacou, affording excellent conditions for Sunday's races. Up from eight Optimists in 2011, 12 boys and one girl, ranging in age from nine to 14, from Bequia, Carriacou and Grenada took the starting line. With steady winds from the east and a windward/leeward course, the Optimists completed three races.

Thirteen-year-old Noah Snagg from Grenada took third overall in Optimists with eight points. Shain Farrell, 14 years old, and Oreokay Joseph, 11 years old, both of BYS, ended with six points each. Despite a tangle with a spectator boat that knocked Oreokay's rudder off just before he rounded the weather mark in the second race, his first place finishes in the first and third races put him in the top spot for the regatta.



Seven Lasers, with a total of 18 competitors, chose to switch from Junior to the Small Open Boat category on the day of the races. Since reduced sails for Radial and 4.7 Lasers are unseen in the Grenadines, youth skippers from Petite Martinique, Carriacou and Grenada choose to carry one or two crew. Mozart St. John of Gouyave, Grenada came in first overall.

Forecast for junior sailing in the Grenadines: Optimistic!

Ellen Birrell enjoys cruising, freelance writing and photography within the Eastern Caribbean. For more, visit www.boldlygo.us.



Clockwise from top left: Bequia Youth Sailors Reon and Shain standing, and Oreokay, Mekaya and Drew seated

Mekaya, Shain and Oreokay head for the leeward mark

Visiting Puerto Rican coach Ronnie Ramos prepares to drop the pin for the Junior Races' start line

Carriacou Optimist sailor, ten-year-old Reniza Sookdeo





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