

Ten Rater 2004 National Championships

by Mark Gee

On October 1, 2, & 3, the Denver Area Model Yacht Association hosted the 10R National Championship regatta. The Denver club once again provided a well-run and fun regatta for the 10R fleet. The Championships taking place this year also brings back National competition for the 10R class, which I hope will become an annual event for many years to come. As always, the 10R skippers demonstrated admirable levels of camaraderie and professionalism, continuing to make me proud to be part of this class. My thanks go out to the Denver Area Model Yacht Association and the many volunteers that made this regatta so successful.

The 10R Nationals were held at Aurora Reservoir, an 800-acre city lake in the Denver suburbs, with facilities ideal for hosting a National event. In addition to catering to full size sailboat fleets, the reservoir also prohibits the use of gasoline-powered engines on the water, so the lake stays pleasantly free of the noise and chop often found on public use lakes. Even better, the park managers and staff were very accommodating to our group and actually welcomed the regatta into their park schedule. 16 skippers, from 5 states, sailed hard in 14 races through the weekend. Sailing conditions varied widely, presenting some very competitive racing. The fleet of 16 was made up of 10 different hull designs from 8 different designers, once again displaying the huge melting pot of design theory found in the 10R fleet. Beautiful etched glass trophies were awarded to the top 4 places in the regatta and all race participants received custom printed "pint" beverage glasses. Thanks to the generous donations of Bob's Boatyard, Great Basin Model Yachting, Hobbytown USA, Tower Hobbies, and Plasticare Inc, there was a nice selection of items distributed as door prizes to the skippers. A new fiberglass Iona hull was also donated and raffled off during the event. The race officials volunteering in this regatta were Mike Kopp and Steve Davis serving as Race Committee, and Mark Gee serving as Race Director.

After several "scouting" days of sailing at Aurora Reservoir, wind strength was recorded above 20kts on several occasions, and the need for alternative rigs became very apparent to nearly everyone. This was a big change from the typical lighter conditions found at the regular club pond, and everyone was eager to see how the 10R's would perform in upper wind ranges. As a result, the week prior to the regatta was filled with "B" rig construction and numerous boat measuring/re-measuring appointments. 11 boats were floated to verify waterline end locations and 36 individual sails were measured. There were several cases during measuring where boats initially rated higher than "10", due mainly to longer than planned waterlines. Sail area was reduced in each case to bring boats back into legality. A second "wing masted" boat joined the fleet this year, as well as a "winged" rudder on one of the converted "M" boats. We also saw the use of masthead-rigged jibs, sheet trimmers, and servo adjustable backstays. It was great to see all the new ideas being tested and put to use in the fleet this year.

Friday, October 1st was an unofficial practice day at the race venue, which traditionally has had very high attendance. Unfortunately, the day was met with rainy weather and temperatures in the upper 30's. While completing the last of the boat measuring, my workshop became the place to wait out the weather for a portion of the group. The weather outside may have been discouraging, but the flurry of ongoing activity in the shop would lead anyone to believe otherwise. At one point we had at least 4 boats completely rigged, owners perched high on ladders working on upper rigging, "B" rigs scattered about, sail number templates in use, and several cases of parts bartering between skippers (clearly, all sorts of creative "specials" on parts develop the day before a regatta), all with onlookers huddled in winter coats and gloves. By mid afternoon, the weather began to improve with clearing skies and slightly warmer temperatures, enticing about half the fleet to get their boats on the water for some practice. The opportunity to have moderate winds was also possible with the predicted passage of a cold front finally occurring.

Saturday, October 2nd was met with typical autumn weather for Denver: temperatures had warmed into the mid 60's with clear, sunny skies. Boat check-in started at 9:30, while the race committee began placing marks on the water. All the races were run right off a swim beach, so access to water was easy, hardly and obstruction in sight, and a smooth sand bottom. With a nearly unlimited area of water available to set racecourses and with the agreement of the skippers, race officials opted to start the group of 16 as a single fleet. This also allowed the RC to build some relatively large courses, which works well with most 10R designs. Simple windward-leeward and windward-leeward-triangle courses were set, with "gates" used at

each end of the course. While new to many of the skippers, using a “gate” for mark rounding eliminated much of the congestion typically found around marks when in a large fleet.

Due to some of the lightest winds I had ever seen at that location, the start of the first race was postponed by nearly an hour. Nightmares of the painfully light air conditions seen in 2003 began to creep into everyone’s minds as the morning races were held in winds fueled by little more than thermals. In one race, the entire fleet of 16 sailed in perfect formation from the start line to the first mark, with hardly a change in position taking place, presenting an interesting rounding with at least 12 abreast. As temperatures continued to warm through the day, wind strength and direction changed to more consistent levels. While the RC set a new racecourse, the group took a one-hour lunch break, with lunch provided by the Denver host club. Four long windward-leeward races were completed after lunch in winds averaging less than 5 kts. Although light, wind direction remained predictably steady for the rest of the afternoon, allowing boats to have long drives at a steady speed. Skippers were forced to maintain concentration and utilize a high level of tactical sailing when working through the large fleet. This became especially apparent as race leaders rounded buoys short, or missed marks completely while watching the fleet behind. Racing was completed by 4pm, allowing the group plenty of time to socialize and leisurely pack up their boats before dinner. A catered Italian dinner was conveniently held at an indoor pavilion just up the beach from where we were racing. While the stories being told easily kept everyone entertained, a power-point slide show with nearly a hundred of the digital photo’s taken that day was also on display. With plenty of food and fine gourmet desserts available to all, the 9 door prizes were awarded to skippers, followed immediately by the raffle for the new Iona hull. Skippers, guests, and DAMYA club members all had a great time with the evening wrapping up by 7pm.

Day three of the regatta was underway by 9am, with coffee, juice, and muffins provided to the group as boats were being set up. The RC also posted the place standings from the previous day of sailing, providing a good conversation topic and reason to get pre-race adrenalin going again. Typical of Denver’s autumn weather, the day began with clear, sunny skies, and very light wind conditions. While skippers were setting up their boats, the RC added several more buoys to the racecourse, allowing several course options to adjust to changing wind conditions throughout the day. Racing resumed nearly an hour late due to very light winds. The first two races were plagued with boat entanglements and various breakdown problems, creating a very slow start for the day. Luckily, wind speeds continued to build through the morning, indicating close to 10 kts by races 9 and 10. The 1-hr lunch break was reduced in order to get back to racing in the stronger winds, with the two converted Marbleheads being the first to suit down to “B” rigs for the remaining races. At least 5 other 10R’s also suited down to their “B” rigs, clearly demonstrating a clear performance advantage over those who stayed with their “A” rigs. With wind speeds averaging between 12-14 kts after lunch, the pace of the last 3 races was exhilarating with boat speeds forcing skippers to run down the beach to keep up with their boats. Start sequences passed in the blink of an eye, boats were nearly leaping from the water on the reaching legs, and time between races expired quickly as boats were drained, adjusted, or repaired. Equally as entertaining as the racing was watching the pace of the skippers between races as batteries were changed and rigs swapped, sometimes with boats being thrown back into the water during the start sequence. The pinnacle of excitement for the day occurred in the last race when two (very fast moving) downwind boats collided with a boat driving hard to weather. The impact caused one of the boats to stand on its nose, flashing rudder, fin, and white bottom paint to the entire fleet behind – and impressive display for a boat 6 ft long. Also unable to avoid the collision, a second boat dramatically lost its fin and bulb, causing it to helplessly lie on its side for the remainder of the race. Being the only ones who didn’t have to steer clear of the carnage before finishing, the race leaders dutifully assisted in helping the damaged boat back to shore. While emotional, all the skippers involved deserve credit for handling the incident in a very sportsmanlike manner in every aspect.

In summary, everyone attending the 2004 Ten Rater Nationals had a great time, many new friends were made, lessons were learned, and a much higher level of competition was experienced than ever before. Finish places, boats, and skippers are listed below, and congratulations this year go to Eric Arndt of Trinidad California as 10R National Champion. This was Eric’s first regatta in the 10R fleet, but his well-tuned boat and some very fine sailing made him a tough competitor. I should also mention that Eric’s occupation is as a full-time professional sailor in the Farr 40 class, but we won’t hold that against him.

Place	Skipper Name	Boat Design	Points
1.	Eric Arndt	Skalpel	17

2.	Marty May	Viper	41
3.	Mark Gee	Stratus	45
4.	John Fisher	Rubicon	49
5.	Denny Hansen	Iona	69
6.	Bob Fisher	Self	73
7.	Rob Fisher	Self	73
8.	Fred Barnes	Emex	84
9.	Dave Davis	Iona	84
10.	Jim Barr	Tomahawk	106
11.	Whitney Gee	Stratus	117
12.	Dick Ball	Sharpie	126
13.	Tim Sheffield	Stratus	126
14.	Tony Kay	Emex	145
15.	Pete Chick	Stratus	154
16.	Shannon Bingham	Coho	184