

“I Can’t Believe We Won the Whole Thing!”

By David Hayslip

2025 Catalina 22 National Champion



Photograph by Elizabeth Quintanilla

The week at Lake Worth was, for the “Enterprise” team, a culmination of preparation, boat handling that improved through the week, and some serious blessings. I would like to dedicate the effort to my late father. “Enterprise” was a late scratch due to cracks on the foredeck and cockpit, so we sailed her stablemate, “Endeavor”, hull 1184, Dad’s boat I inherited. She was the 1980 national champion as “Sunshine” sailed by Jim Wilson. She becomes one of only two boats I am aware of that have won the nationals under more than one skipper; hull 221 has won under three.

After being swept in both events we sailed last year, the Detroit nationals and Grapevine’s Gold Rush, Jud and I discussed sailing with three. Even in light air conditions, our sail handling is smoother with three. My feeling was that while we had a very breezy spring, June would bring lighter winds, and I didn’t want to pay a substantial weight penalty for crew. We had sailed Gold Rush with three, but in reviewing those races, I noticed that when the third crew was partially in the cockpit, Jud was sometimes at an awkward angle for the sheets. I asked Rhonda Harper, my friend of sixty years and a former crew, to join us as our third. Upwind we kept her positioned in either the companion way or on the cabin top while Jud handled the sheets; her position was on the cabin top for downwind legs; she also made adjustments at the control board. This setup allows me to ignore the mainsheet and focus on the headsail sheets on gybe maneuvers with Jud handling the pole and Rhonda pulling the main around. This arrangement was extremely helpful and would ultimately prove its worth in what proved to be the final race. We had new instruments, but the mounting bracket was delivered Friday after the regatta. I finally used the included mount, installing the equipment before Wednesday’s races; we had a little trouble with control lines blocking the view, but

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Photograph provided by Dan Ludden.

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the new mount will take care of that. The instruments were crucial to decision making during the four-race day particularly on the downwind legs.

The blessings came on Sunday when winds forecast up to 95 mph overnight never developed; a couple of stations recorded 80 mph, but the area largely saw little over 60 mph. We had left the boat on the trailer because we were unsure how the docks with all the extra boats would behave. Next, beginning Monday, the temperatures dropped to highs in the low 80s where measurement had taken place in a very humid mid-90s. Finally, being a local gave us a little home field advantage. Jud got to sleep in his own bed at home; I also got to go home every day and play with my dog; Rhonda and her mother, Barbara, stayed in Lake Worth as the weekday commute from NE of DFW would have been tedious. My mother made several appearances during the week, and Barbara was there the whole week, so we had lots of support during the event.

As for the races themselves, the nationals are not won on the first day, but they can be lost. Jud and Rhonda worked well; we had worked up to second at the last mark of race one. The only rust that showed was when I sailed us down to a seventh-place finish. If we had held on to our position, we would have finished the day one point out of first. We finished the day seventh overall seven points out, but I felt we had the speed to win the regatta moving into day two if I didn't do anything screwy!

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Photograph provided by Dan Ludden.

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No races could be sailed Tuesday after the early morning storms killed the wind for the day. I was a bit concerned that we needed more races to have a chance to improve our standing.

Going into Wednesday's races the task was a little more daunting in light of being unable to help our position on Tuesday. I told the crew that if we could put a couple of races in the top three, we might climb into the top three overall. With the legs being about 0.4 miles, we knew starting would be critical. We consistently started two-thirds to three-quarters of the way down the line to avoid congestion and slowing influences at the ends. We kept our speed up throughout the starting sequence; this gave us opportunities on the first leg to operate in space and pick and choose where we wanted to tack. What happened next was incredible. We finished 1-1-2 in the first three races of the day. Three of the top boats had double digit races, so we had moved into the lead. We were among the top of the fleet in race four when we got tangled up at the windward mark. The next few minutes were something of a blur, but when we finally got rolling again, we crossed behind "Katabatic", "Zydeco Woman", and a couple of others. The boat was quiet, but the focus was absolute as we went to work. We had a very nice second windward leg; based on the results, I think we had moved up to about 12th. We passed a couple early on the final leg with smooth gybes under a couple of puffs. About twelve to fifteen lengths out, we trailed "Gray Pride" and "Small Fry" with all of us on port tack. Approaching the finish, our speed had been gradually decreasing; I felt a little movement on the back of my neck (I got a haircut the week before nationals) and turned to see a puff coming from our right. We gybed immediately resulting in speed increasing over half a knot. We surged by the two port tackers as we came in to finish. I was doubtful of where we stood after that race; Jud told me we were 8th or 9th for race 4, and when the results were posted, we still had a one-point lead going into the last day.

When I arrived for day four, I was surprised how calm the lake appeared. I went out to the boat to check the tune while the spinnaker fleet went out. If another Gold fleet race were completed, a score would be discounted which would have put us one point out of first with another to score. Too, Justin would be right back in the mix in spite of a broken rudder in race six. Justin and Mickey were the only other two with all single digit finishes, and I felt that they would help put pressure on the other top boats. The spinnaker fleet came back in with no opportunity to start a race. My crew arrived, and we had lunch at the club. The race committee postponed racing in a way that would allow them to start quickly if a breeze came up. We had a 1300 deadline for first signal for the last day. Some of the boats started pulling out around noon. About 1230 the committee hoisted AP

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over A meaning no more racing for the day. We had done the unlikely in vaulting from seventh to first on day three, and we were now national champions! Thanks to Jud and Rhonda for an outstanding week!

Thanks to Hal Smith and Dora McGee and their committee for perseverance and quality races. Thanks to Julia and Fleet 82 for always making us at home!

For the “Enterprise” team this marked a personal seventh national championship, a fourteenth top two nationals finish, a championship with our fifth different crew, and national titles in each of the last five decades. To quote Jim Wilson who sailed the boat to the 1980 national championship, “I can’t believe we won the whole thing!”



Photograph provided by David Hayslip.



*Photograph provided by
Barbara Dralle.*