



Edgartown Race Weekend

J/105 Double Handed Crew Wins Coveted Venona Trophy

EDGARTOWN, MARTHA'S VINEYARD, MASS. (June 25, 2024) – Henry Sesselberg's J/105 *Ubuntu* (Cape Elizabeth, Maine), a double handed entry in Edgartown Yacht Club's 'Round the Island Race ('RTI), managed to sail away with the coveted Venona Trophy in the recently concluded [Edgartown Race Weekend](#). The 'RTI, an annual circumnavigation of Martha's Vineyard that is one of America's oldest distance races, realized its 87th running on Saturday, June 22 when 48 boats, including *Ubuntu*, competed. The 'RTI followed two days of 'Round-the-Sound ('RTS) races that – with a fleet of 12 – were scored separately for their own awards.

“The Venona Trophy, an 'RTI overall award as storied as the race is old, is awarded to the team with the fastest corrected time of any fully crewed spinnaker class boat,” said Principal Race Officer Bob Hurst. “The team also has to be in the class that sails the longest course should the course be shortened for any particular class or classes, which happened this year.”

Although Sesselberg and (Chris) Morin sailed double handed on *Ubuntu* in the Double Handed Class, they were scored for the Venona with their fully crewed rating.

“We got somewhat lucky, but on the other hand we sailed one of our better double handed races ever,” said Sesselberg, explaining that the Double Handed Class's downwind spinnaker start was the second behind the PHRF Non-Spinnaker Class and preceded seven other PHRF Spinnaker classes in what became a decidedly challenging light-air race. *Ubuntu* got a bit of southeasterly air that allowed it to “escape” with others in its class while the starts behind it were delayed due to fog and a barely-there breeze.

Around the bottom of the island (near Muskeget), Andrew Seguin's double handed entry, the Quest 33 *Stern Lecture* (Osterville, Mass.), and *Ubuntu* were boat-for-boat when the latter team found another relatively fresh breeze and separated. By the time *Ubuntu* finished off Gay Head – in a building northwesterly breeze and on a course shortened by the Race Committee

due to impending thunderstorms – only two of the bigger boats from behind had passed it. (Fourteen boats finished at this Finish Line 3, while the balance of the fleet finished shorter courses abbreviated either at Line 2 east of Squibnocket on the south side of the island or Line 1 at the south end of Muskeget Channel.)



Clockwise from top left: Venona Trophy winner *Ubuntu* in the 'RTI Race, *Mischief* handling a knockdown on Day 1 of the 'RTS races, *Zebra* in the 'RTI race, class start on Day 2 of the 'RTS races. Photos by Rick Bannerot

“My father sailed this race in the early 1950s, so I’ve always wanted to do it,” said Sesselberg. “It’s a wonderful event, and Edgartown loves racers...we have nothing but good things to say. We’ve got to come back!”

To Sesselberg's point, Event Chair Hal Findlay said, "I'm always blown away by how grateful participants are, how excited they are to be here, and how willing they are to keep coming back even if they have to endure trying conditions."

'Round-the-Sound: A Mix of Heavy- and Light-Air Racing

The 'RTS racing had its own challenges. On Thursday, spinnaker classes started a 16-mile windward/leeward course (around government marks) in the relatively protected Outer Harbor, with some having to muscle through spectacular knockdowns in 17-26 knots of wind.

The Cruising class sailed 12-mile triangular courses, with tamer reaches and runs, before gliding into Friday's race where, for both classes, winds coming from many directions at different times never exceeded seven knots.

After 'RTS racing concluded on Friday, Chris Sheehan's Cape 31 *Warrior Won* (Larchmont, N.Y.), Frank Sutula's W Class 46 *Zebra* (Cambridge/Vineyard Haven, Mass.), and Michael Powers' Tartan 3500 *Artful Dodger* (Teaticket, Mass.) had won PHRF Spinnaker Class A, PHRF Spinnaker Class B and PHRF Non-Spinnaker, respectively, with *Zebra* and *Artful Dodger* going on to win Spinnaker Classes D and F, respectively, in the 'RTI.

"I've gone for the glory of just sailing around the island in other years," said *Zebra's* skipper Frank Sutula, who in 2013 won the Venona Trophy with his Sansa 355 *Soma Holiday*, "but this time we did the 'RTS because we're new to the boat. We had just sailed it down from Maine, and we figured we could shake some things out." (Sutula skippers *Zebra* and sails with his son Alexander and three fellow Vineyard Haven residents who are co-owners: Stuart Halpert, Peter Howell, and JP St. Germain.)

"In the 'RTS, we won on a tiebreaker with *Mischief* (a Lyman-Morse 40 owned by David Schwartz of Bristol, R.I.)," said Sutula. "We experienced 23.2 knots on the first day, and we saw *Mischief* having trouble with its spinnaker, but she won. Then the next day it was so dead that a few feet from the finish we started going backwards...and we won."

For the 'RTI race, Sutula's son "called the spinnaker start just right." As it had been in the 'RTS races, *Mischief* was close at hand, but near the jibe mark at Cape Poge, *Zebra* crossed her. "We dropped (the chute) at just the right time, because when we were close hauled in Muskeget Channel we looked back and *Mischief* was dead in the water." (*Mischief* wound up fifth in Class D.)

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Full results 'RTS here: <https://bit.ly/4cd4gVX>

Full results 'RTI here: <https://bit.ly/4bkRUcZ>

Special Awards here: <https://bit.ly/45GYRUy>

For more information on Edgartown Race Weekend, go to www.rtirace.org Follow the regatta on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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