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Weather Delays Make Way For The Best Sailing Days

A one day weather delay was our introduction to the 8th Conch Republic Cup. Weather experts and the CRC race committee gave every opportunity for the weather to break and keep racing on schedule but the low pressure system built in the gulf stream making a passage MORE than challenging. The delay was followed by a 5PM start on Friday, January 29th and pleasant crossing in 12 – 17 knots of Easterly breeze and a comfortable 6 foot swell.

Michele Geslin Memorial Cup; Race 1 winners

PHRF A	Naut on Call	Eddie Evans
PHRF B	Bobsled	Bob Moran
Cruising	Diastole	Martin Zonnenberg
Multihull	Little Wing	Ron Boehm
Schooner	When and If	Seth Salzman

That one day delay made for a tight schedule to get racing back on track. After the early morning to mid afternoon arrival at Marina Gaviota in Varadero Cuba on Saturday the crews were welcomed with an evening bash. A long slog to the starting area designated by our Cuban host yacht club, Club Nautico International Hemingway de La Havana gave recovery time to all before the race start in view of Varadero Beach. The day's racing was again followed by festivities at Marina Gaviota which included a large buffet and awards ceremony for races 1 & 2.

Varadero Cup; Race 2 winners

PHRF A	Obsession	Norman Church Jr.
	Tohidu	Jay Cook
	In a dead even tie on corrected time	
PHRF B	Perseverance	Bennet Greenwald
Cruising	Sayonara	David and Kristen Buckley
Multihull	Little Wing	Ron Boehm
Schooner	Apella	Daniel Hall

Another quick turn around on Monday had crews checking out of the marina early and headed to the start of the Cuba Coastal Challenge from Varadero to.....Marina Hemingway, Havana. With over 50 boats checking out and light morning winds there was double cause for the 1hr 45min delay. This gave way to a steady 8-12 knot breeze through

the afternoon and evening with partly cloudy skies and a clear view of the Cuba coast as we headed west in some close quarters coastal dueling. Our finishers were greeted at Marina Hemingway with clear skies and a jet ski guide down the entrance channel to the customs dock.

Cuba Coastal Challenge; Race 3 winners

PHRF A	Liberte	David Kilmer
PHRF B	Bobsled	Bob Moran
Cruising	Diastole	Martin Zonnenberg
Multihull	Little Wing	Ron Boehm
Schooner	None Participating	

Finally a lay day!!! The hard working crews and even harder working race committee had the chance to visit the real Cuba with bus tours and vintage convertible taxi rides through Havana, the culturally rich and diverse city that has been lost to most Americans for decades. Although key race management and partial race committee took this opportunity to look ahead at the weather to assure the safest possible passage back across the Florida Straits. Tuesday evening saw yet another welcome reception at Club Nautico International with our host Commodore Jose Escrich. Also joining us on this evening was the US Embassy representative, USCG Lieutenant Commander Cromwell. Some of the best live Cuban music and a very succulent roast pig were the featured attraction of the evening,

An updated weather forecast and a new amendment to the Sailing Instructions had crews hustling once again. Weather patterns once again changing our race schedule for an early departure this time. The announcement Tuesday evening called for the finish of the Wednesday buoy race to also be the start of the Havana to Key West crossing race in order to avoid being shut into Marina Hemingway by northern fronts. The noon Wednesday start of the Castle de Morro Cup went off in pleasant racing conditions with the picturesque backdrop of the Havana waterfront. For the first time in history we had a video drone shooting aerial footage of the regatta in Cuba.

Conditions turned challenging in the afternoon and evening for the crossing home, just the conditions most competitors were looking for to finish off a great week of close racing. 10 foot seas and 17 – 25 knot winds from the east made for a quick passage back to Key West to finish the regatta.

Castle de Morro Cup; Race 4 winners

PHRF A	Naut on Call	Eddie Evans
PHRF B	Perseverance	Bennet Greenwald
Cruising	Cheers	James B. Smith
Multihull	Little Wing	Ron Boehm
Schooner	Apella	Daniel Hall

Havana – Key West; Race 5 winners

PHRF A	Naut on Call	Eddie Evans
PHRF B	Pretty Vegas	Alesjandro Sastre
Cruising	Diastole	Martin Zonnenberg
Multihull	Little Wing	Ron Boehm
Schooner	When and If	Seth Salzman

Overall Winner of the Conch Republic Cup

Charleston racer Eddie Evans and crew on Naut on Call to the Conch Republic Cup overall honors by a narrow 1 point margin over Alesjandro Sastre's Pretty Vegas of Coconut Grove. The combined total of the 3 distance races brought forth the best in three ranges of racing conditions. We expect Eddie (Captain America) Evans to return in 2017 to defend this title.

About The Conch Republic Cup

For what began in 1997 as a cordial invitation from Commodore Escrich to the Key West Sailing Club (as it was known at the time) to resume our annual race to Varadero from the 1970s, this has become an epic event. The KWSC Fleet Captain at the time was Peter Goldsmith who, upon receiving the invitation stated "I don't care what anybody thinks, I just want to sail my boat to Cuba." The 1997 and 1998 race continued as the previous races had been run. Then in 1999 Commodore Escrich proposed this multi race format we use today. The 5 race series of the Conch Republic Cup was run by Peter Goldsmith and his partner Michele Geslin for the entire 7 year with the last such event being held in 2003. At this time, with the "encouragement" of the US Government this regatta was discontinued. Recent developments and policy changes within the US – Cuba relations normalization have once again made it possible to continue our annual "Cultural Exchange Through Sport" after a 13 year hiatus. We look forward to re-establishing this bond with our Cuban neighbors by continuing our maritime traditions in the 2016 running of this event.

Official Event Photography will be available from Priscilla Parker at <http://www.priscillaparker.com/>. pparkerchs@bellsouth.net

Official Video B reel will be available by contacting Jeff@MainsailNews.TV. Video provided by Big Impact Films
T2P TV
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