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## Not your average Marion Bermuda race

By BARBARA VENERI, Standard-Times correspondent

It was a year of firsts for the 2003 Marion Bermuda Cruising Yacht Race.

Guy S. Jones became the first African-American to win the 645-mile offshore challenge. He won it in *Gorgeous Girl*, a Pacific Seacraft 40-footer racing in its first Marion Bermuda.

This was the first Marion Bermuda for almost half of the 78 boats racing.

And, from start to finish, none dropped out.

This was the first race for the *Kathleen*, a 72-foot custom yawl, the only wooden boat in this year's race. Owned and skippered by Jim Feeney of Marion, president of Horizon Marine, the *Kathleen* placed 28th overall and third in the A1 celestial navigation class.

It was the first Marion Bermuda for *Starr Trail*, the only other 72-foot boat in the race and winner in Class A1. *Starr Trail* placed sixth overall.

In Class B1 (celestial navigation, smaller yachts), *Cordelia*, a Valiant 42-footer took home the first place trophy and finished third overall.

Normally moored in Sippican Harbor, *Cordelia* is owned and sailed by Roy and Gail Greenwald of Winchester, captain and navigator, respectively.

"We really hit where we wanted to go," said Gail Greenwald. And, they did it without using the spinnaker, which would have penalized them according to the rules of the race.

Racing in the MBR was something the Greenwalds "always wanted to do as a couple," she continued. "We wanted to see how well we would do with other boats around us and crew on board. We're thrilled -- we had no idea our boat is as fast as she is."

This year's Marion Bermuda was one of the fastest in the history of the race, with all 78 yachts passing St. David's Light off St. George's Harbor in Bermuda before any boats had done so in the last MBR in 2001.

Winner Jones had no idea he had finished first when he went ashore in Hamilton to clear customs. Other captains waiting in line were congratulating him, he said, so he checked the results. When he found out *Gorgeous Girl* had taken first place, he turned around and raced back to tell the crew.

A captain in the U.S. Army from 1966 to 1969, Jones was wounded in Vietnam and lost his right hand.

"I take no offense in the statement that I bring a whole new meaning to sailing 'single-handed,'" he joked.

Like many of the participants in this year's race, Jones, who has been sailing since 1973, decided to compete in the MBR in order to make sure that he and his vessel were ready for ocean cruising.

"The MBR race organization has so many safety requirements and inspections that I knew if we were accepted into the race, I could sail her anywhere," he said. His first race was the 2002 Annapolis to Bermuda Race



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where he placed first in class and ninth overall. He has logged more than 3,000 ocean miles and loves cruising and living on his boat whenever he can.

"The MBR is technically challenging," he said. "You have a lot of things to think about in planning your strategy."

Along with his son, also named Guy S. Jones, as navigator, the Gorgeous Girl carried a crew of two other Americans and two Canadians in the race.

It took Jones and Gorgeous Girl four days, five hours, 34 minutes and 35 seconds to finish the race, but on corrected time, they finished in two days and nearly three hours, enough to advance the first-time competitor to the head of the fleet.

In yet another first for the 2003 MBR, Faith Paulsen, longtime race organizer aboard the Kathleen with husband Charles, spied the first Bermuda longtail -- the signature bird of the island of Bermuda -- in the Gulf Stream, well north of their typical range.

According to the Kathleen's captain, he and the other 11 crewmembers onboard (some of them fathers and sons) really enjoyed the race.

"It was a lot of fun with friends onboard," said Feeney. The crew, he said, consisted of "young guys and old guys plus one lady (Faith Paulsen) who kept us all sane."

Aboard Thistle, a Seguin 44-footer that placed first in Class B2 (electronic navigation), the strategy was to fly the spinnaker for at least 24 hours, knowing that they'd take a time penalty but using the wind to their advantage.

"We planned the race around a variety of conditions," said tactician Lincoln Spaulding of Worcester. The use of electronics, such as radar and GPS, "lets you use the ocean and the data," he added.

Thistle's captain, Bruce MacNeil added, "the Marion Bermuda race is terrific because they don't allow professionals. It's still the only offshore amateur race."

Both Thistle and this year's lone entry from the U.S. Naval Academy, Flirt, took advantage of the spinnaker as well as tactics to get to Bermuda.

Flying the spinnaker "let us maintain a higher course," said Spaulding. "We always knew we could fall off and pop the chute and still have equivalent if not better boat speed."

Using celestial navigation and an asymmetrical spinnaker, the midshipmen aboard Flirt passed about 30 other competitors as they left Buzzards Bay.

The Navy's strategy, according to Flirt's captain, Midshipman 1st Class Travis Wood, was to "focus on keeping everything the same to fill the spinnaker as long as we could."

Flirt finished second in Class A1.







For each MBR, the midshipmen from the Naval Academy participate to give their varsity offshore sailing team (VOST) open ocean racing experience.

While Wood made all the decisions during this year's race, VOST assistant coach Pete Carrico and Cmdr. Gerard Vandenberg served as safety officers aboard ship.

"Travis made all the decisions," said Cmdr. Vandenberg, "then afterward we discuss the pros and cons of (each) action so all the crew can learn from it."

At last night's awards ceremony, the Ocean Spray Team Trophy went to the Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club. Seven teams of three boats apiece competed for this year's trophy. In 1999, the first year Ocean Spray awarded the trophy, the team from the U.S. Naval Academy took it back to Annapolis; in 2001, the Harraseeket Yacht Club of Freeport, Maine, took it home.

The Cordelia captured the Beverly Yacht Club Polaris Trophy for best performance by a boat in a celestial navigation class. Best performance by a navigator went to Gail Greenwald of the Cordelia.

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This story appeared on Page E9 of The Standard-Times on June 29, 2003.



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