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## **Tim Healy Wins 2008 J/24 North American Championship**

Lake Minnetonka, Minn.— Tim Healy won a closely fought 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary J24 North American Championship on Lake Minnetonka sponsored by SMUCKER'S Uncrustables. John Mollicone finished second with local sailor Chad Olness in third. Racing occurred in a wide range of conditions with big shifts being the constant. This was the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the J24 fleet, returning to Fleet #1 on Lake Minnetonka in Minnesota at the Wayzata Yacht Club.

The District Championship “U-Gotta Regatta” served as the North American's pre-regatta on the Saturday and Sunday preceding the North American's. Several teams took advantage of the two extra days of sailing to maximize their sailing time and enjoy the hospitality of Wayzata, which Sailing World magazine recently ranked as one of the nation's top sailing communities. Farkas Litkey won the “farthest traveled” award hands down with his entire team traveling from Budapest, Hungary. They also managed a third in the U-Gotta Regatta. Longtime class veteran Rolf Turnquist was second and Tim Healy won in a precursor to the North American's event.

Unfortunately, after the U-Gotta Regatta several teams from the well represented Texas contingent sent members home to prepare for Hurricane Ike. After some scrambling, local sailors were able to fill the empty slots and all boats were able to race the NA's.

## DAY 1



Race Committee duty was not a fun job to have as racers moved onto the lake. Everyone was greeted with a light and shifty breeze that was just enough wind to sail but not enough to conduct a decent race. Fortunately P.R.O. Blake Middleton made the tough decision and held his ground against the antsy racers while keeping everyone drifting around until after lunch.

Finally, the wind improved and the 2008 North American's began in earnest. Two races were completed in the afternoon with Will Welles showing strong results of a 3-1 in the 33 boat fleet. John Mollicone (1-8) and Bill Fatiggi (8-2) finished 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> for the day. These light air conditions could have favored the local racers, but Chad Olness was the only local boat to break the top five for the day with matching 5-5's.

The first mark rounding of race one was picture perfect. Fleet #1 founding boat #007 gave everything her 30 year old hull could manage and rounded the first mark in first place with Sean Delaney at the helm. Just behind was #007's original owner Rolf Turnquist and Fleet #1's founding Fleet Captain John Gjerde sailing their current boat #3577. You can't make this stuff up and the spectator fleet horns were predictably deafening as the boats rounded the first weathermark overlapped.

Turnquist once again had Olympic Gold Medalist Bill Allen helming for him this week. Allen and Turnquist have been friends since high school and sailed together in J24 #007 when they placed second at the 1977 MORC Nationals.

## DAY 2



A perfect day to race with steel gray skies and 10-12 knot winds allowed the fleet to get in three races on day two. There was just enough wind for a few boats shy on crew weight to try blades, but genoas were the rule of the day. Big shifts also ruled the day placing course management tactics at a premium. The big wind shifts could reward just as much as they could punish. John Molicone started off race 5 with an OCS, but managed to pick his way through the fleet for a 5th place finish. Tim Healy also had the shifts figured out and came home with a 1-1-2 for the day placing him first overall going into the evening festivities.

## DAY 3



The steel gray skies of day two turned to rain for Day 3 with a medium breeze in the teens helping to keep

everyone busy and hopefully warm. Again, the south winds of Lake Minnetonka brought wind shifts that could punish as easily a reward. Along with the wind shifts came regular velocity changes calling for plenty of string pulling to keep the speed up. Tim Healy slyly referred to the day's conditions as "super variable".

John Mollicone was the star of the day with a 2-1 moving him into second overall and putting him in striking distance of an upset in the final race on Day 4. Tim Healy locked in his qualification for the 2009 Worlds since he could finish no worse than 2<sup>nd</sup> overall going into day 4.

## Day 4



Day four was a brutal day for the race committee and competitors alike as the wind teased everyone before going on vacation. The early morning breeze was shifty causing several delays and restarts. Finally the racing got under way 30 minutes after it's scheduled start, but instead of settling down the shifty breezes had simply been a precursor to no breeze. A sunny section of sky would blow by and the thermals picked the wind up off the water, a cloudy section would blow by and let a few wisps of wind push the boats along in a seemingly random order.

Predictably the top boats somehow managed to make it to the front of the fleet with Bob Harden earning his win in a horizon job fashion. Behind in another group on the horizon Chad Olness and Dave Breitner took advantage of their local knowledge to secure second and third after battling much of the long day overlapped at several mark roundings. Olness' move from 5<sup>th</sup> up to 3<sup>rd</sup> on day 4 qualifies him for the final slot at the J24 Worlds.

The real drama was occurring in the back of the fleet where Tim Healy was left behind watching John Mollicone take off with hopes of a first place finish that could propel him to an event win. Fortunately, at least

for Healy, Mollicone also drifted deep into the fleet with both boats taking respective 18 and 9 drops for the day.

This is Healy's second North American Championship. Qualifiers for the J24 Worlds at this regatta included Healy, Mollicone, and Olness.

Complete final results are available at

<http://www.j24northamericans.com/pages/day4.html>

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