

Model behavior



Helen Neafsey/Staff photo

John Schinto displays a model sailboat at the Model Sailboat Regatta at Binney Park pond yesterday. Schinto said it took him 30 hours to make the model.

Scores of fans watch hobbyists launch their sailboats

By Michael Dinan
Staff Writer

A rapt crowd of 150 nautical enthusiasts sat on the edges of their fold-out chairs around the bank of Binney Pond yesterday afternoon. Others jockeyed for standing room on a nearby footbridge, stretched to their tip-toes and hoisted young children to their shoulders to watch a fleet of homemade sailboats — some held together with twigs or duct tape — race across the still water.

Compared with the sleek mini-catamarans and motor boats in eight other races at the 42nd Annual Old Greenwich-Riverside Community Center Model Sailboat Regatta, the homemade vessels were neither fast nor beautiful. But for participants in the division — some first-timers, some who have been racing for decades — the creativity, spontaneity and teamwork that goes into building a sailboat makes the race the most fun.

"It's Styrofoam with a plastic box top for a sail," Zayne Sibley, 10, a fifth-grader at

the International School at Dundee said of boat No. 55, "The Thing," which she and her twin sister, Westin, put together a few hours before the race. "We entered one last year, too, but it didn't move. This is the best one we've done so far."

Discouraged by a slight wind that wouldn't carry The Thing across the finish line, the Sibleys and their friends, including Karlie Werdmolder, 9, a Riverside School fifth-grader, threw wave-making rocks at its stern to push it along.

Matthew Wenger, 12, an Eastern Middle School seventh-grader, tried to do the same for his boat, "Cuba."

"It's called Cuba because I'm half-Cuban. I drew the Cuban flag on it," Wenger said, launching a stone into the pond. "I made it today. I found the bottom of it near here, it's like a Styrofoam lunch tray, and the sail is a grocery store bag."

One of Wenger's friends accidentally struck Cuba in the hull, sinking her.

Five-year-old Aidan McLeod and his mom, Megan McLeod, 37, of Cos Cob, ran

sticks through three empty plastic bottles, then attached a piece of foil and a leaf for a sail.

"I'm trying to push it," Aidan, a Cos Cob School first-grader, said as he poked at his boat with a stick. "It's not going, though."

Franziska Haight, 40, helped two of her kids, Richard, 5, and Madeleine, 8, both Old Greenwich School students, put together a pirate ship with a computer's Styrofoam packaging, masking tape, picture frame hook for a keel, and a buccaneer action figure at the helm.

"It would have sailed if it had enough wind," Haight said. "But that's not what makes this event so much fun. The kids love it, and we're going to perfect our design next year. We're working on a future winner."

A handful of participants in the regatta, the community center's biggest event of the year, have been winners for decades.

Greenwich native Sigrid Bray's father, John Wiske, a Norwegian yachting captain, built "Windward" out of mahogany. The

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sailboat is modeled on a 52-foot yacht belonging to his employer, George Lauder Jr., whose family donated Island Beach to the town in 1918.

"Coming to the regatta is a long-standing family tradition and Windward is a multiple winner," said Bray, 64, one of three generations of the family at the races.

Greenwich native Ernest Banker, 80, of Byram, has competed at the regatta with his son, Chip Banker, 43, since 1967.

"You've got to spend some time on the homemade boats, especially," said Ernest Banker, a lifelong sailor and former U.S. Navy lieutenant whose grandchildren won a handful of events yesterday. "I think this brings a lot of parents and children together."

Winners

Top three winning boats and sailors included:

Division I (Children 10 and under)

1. "Red Splash," Maggie Glen
2. "Brittany," Kirstin Sitarz
3. "Black Beauty," Maya Campanelli

Division II (Children 10 and over)

1. "Kristen," Colin Wentworth
2. "Black Hawk," Hunter Eggers
3. "Seaquest," Alexander Salisbury

Division III (Monohulls up to 17 inches)

1. "Dragon Fly," Helen Hansel
2. "Miss Leader," Paul Hansel
3. "Green and Blue Sailor," Paul Hansel

Division IV (Monohulls more than 17 inches)

1. "Fireball," Claire Mac and Spencer Baxter
2. "Red Splash," Mag-

- gie Glyn, Liza Moore
3. "Windward," Eddie Bray

Division V (Catamarans and Trimarans)

1. "Isililil," Tim Dodge
2. "The Blue Wizard," Stephen Ohlemeyer
3. "Outsider 2," Jack Hodgkinson;

Division VI (Adults only)

1. "Isililil," Tim Dodge
2. "Mariner," Allen Haight
3. "Windward," Ed Bray

Division VII (Homemade boats)

1. "Isililil," Tim Dodge
2. "Fairwind," Kristin Sitarz
3. "Windward," Ed Bray

Division VIII (Radio controlled sailboats)

1. "748," John Schinto
2. (Unnamed) Joby Brek
3. "1135," John Logue

Division IX (Radio controlled motor boats)

1. (Unnamed) Rocco Campanelli
2. (Unnamed) Steve Duplesie