

THE RACING

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The International 14 North Americans, hosted by RYC in August. Clockwise from top left: Mikey Radziejowski and Evan Sjostedt on USA 1162; blasting off the startline; Paul Galvez and Cameron MacDonald on USA 1168; eventual champions Terence Gleeson and Ian Furlong on USA 1187.

Fantastic Conditions for I-14 NAs

While there's an active International 14 skiff fleet on San Francisco Bay, it's been a while since there's been a major event held in the shadow of the Golden Gate — the 2014 US Nationals hosted by Richmond YC was the most recent. So it was with great excitement that the 2017 North Americans returned to RYC this August 18-20, a warm-up for both the West Coast fleet and the race committee ahead of the World Championships due to land in the Point a year from now.

Conditions, as expected on the Bay in the summer, were challenging, and every boat found itself upside down at one point or another during the weekend, but these guys wouldn't have wanted anything less.

"Racing I-14s on Berkeley Circle is an absolute blast. The boats were fully ripping, hitting 12 knots upwind and 20+ downwind," said Terence Gleeson, fleet president and 2017 NA champion. Gleeson sailed with former Australian national champion Ian 'Footy' Furlong.

"It's a challenging racecourse with both sides of the track paying at certain times and tides to contend with," said

Footy. "The breeze was steady and not over the top for the I-14s. We very rarely turned our mainsail inside out uphill; the tide was probably the most challenging factor downhill, but also the most exciting."

One slight disappointment was the absence of any Canadian boats, though Australia was well represented. Besides Footy sailing with Gleeson, Cameron McDonald crewed for third-place Paul Galvez, and Dave Alexander and Dan Wilsdon took second sailing the brand-new Henderson Boat Company-built B6.

"Having sailed the Worlds in '97 at Richmond, we knew what to expect. It can be fast and furious and testing at times, and it left me wanting more," said Alexander. "I'd like to thank John Clark for trusting Dan and me with his brand-new toy, and RYC members Pat and Jerry for hosting us for the week. The club is a genuine sailing club and a very experienced race committee, and we're looking forward to next year's Worlds."

RYC members turned out in huge numbers to run the regatta — there were nearly as many volunteers as there were competitors.

"I was very pleased with the regatta management both on and off the water," said Gleeson. "We felt the lines and courses were square and the reach marks were difficult but fair. You could tell that the overall RC is a well-oiled machine. RYC's race management is a big bright spot in West Coast racing, and they do a great job with skiffs, which is a lot different from managing other classes."

There were 15 boats registered for NAs; 80 are expected for the Worlds. Several Australian, British, German and Canadian teams are expected to be among the top competitors.

"In order for anyone to do very well at Worlds, we need to bring everyone in the US fleet up. I will be pushing as hard as possible to get everyone there," said Mikey Radziejowski, 2014 International Canoe World Champion and fourth place at this year's I-14 NAs with Evan Sjostedt. "RYC, as usual, put on a fantastic event. I don't have a doubt in my mind that the Worlds will be one to remember!"

—jenn virskus

I-14 NORTH AMERICANS, RYC, 8/18-20 (8r, 1t)

1) Terence Gleeson/Ian Furlong, Southwestern YC, 10 points; 2) Dave Alexander/Dan Wilsdon, Adelaide SC, 21; 3) Paul Galvez/Cameron