

MELGES 20 Worlds Wrap Up

In late summer I heard from Ryan Walsh who proposed sailing the club's Melges 20 "Moby" in the class's World Championship. Of course, I was in, but I immediately had thoughts of "Who was going to sail?" and "How realistic was this idea?" But, in true Ryan Walsh style, I was told not to worry about the who's, what's or why's and to just make sure I was happy with the boat. Before I knew it, Caleb Armstrong had signed on, and we created a worklist of projects to get the boat up to speed. Responsibilities were divided up, and we chewed through the work to assemble a boat that could handle all that the fall conditions would throw at it.

Fast forward to the event. With one day of practice as a team and an older Melges 20, it became very obvious that we had some serious work to do to compete. The Melges 20 is an owner driven sport boat, with no limits on professional crew and teams with multiple boats, sails and coaches. The racing attracts the best of the best sailors throughout the world, and the one design element keeps the racing tight at the top end of the fleet. Winning is beyond difficult, and placing is well respected amongst the sailors. And here we are team "Moby", representing NBYC, with a former college sailor, a local PHRF guru and a sailing coach, looking to do battle with some of the worlds best professionals and top amateur helmsman.

Day one brought big breeze and a racing location out in the ocean that was less than forgiving to a 20 foot boat. We made our fair share of mistakes, including broaching three times in the second race, but we owned those mistakes and searched for avenues to address them. Needless to say, you must be on your game as a team when you are repeatedly doing 18 knots over and through waves with the entire boat awash. We sat in 24th place, with lots of racing ahead.

Day two brought slightly less breeze but still fast, planeing conditions with longer waves to surf. We were very strong about the plan we needed to execute in order to be successful: go straight (limiting tacks and jibes), keep the boat flat (the foils only work if they are under the boat), and get away from the starting area (where the fleet is closest and maneuvers are costly). This simple plan was executed to a tee, and we spent most of the days sailing in the top 3 positions! Ryan kept us going upwind, keeping the boat flat and focused on target speed. Caleb had us flying downwind, maneuvering the boats through waves and keeping us blasting across the water at speeds in the mid-teens. The team would complete the day jumping ten spots, and sat in 14th place after six races. More impressively, our NBYC team's total for the day ranked as having the best performance across the fleet!