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50th St. Thomas International Regatta Concludes with High Seas Excitement

A spectacular display of sailing skill and strategy marks the event's milestone anniversary

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C24 Class Winner Bill T. L to R: Maruice Kurg, Cy Thompson, Emma Walters, Eric Cusin, Spencer LeGrande. By. INGRID ABERY

The seascape off the coast of St. Thomas was awash with spinnakers on the final day of the 50th St. Thomas International Regatta (STIR); a spectacular finale to a highly competitive event.

With winds ranging from 10 to 17 knots and finally settling into the traditional easterly direction, sailors experienced optimal conditions, a change from the unpredictability in earlier stages of the competition.

On Sunday, the IC24 Class participated in intense round-the-buoy races in Great Bay, while the larger fleet embarked on a challenging 14 nautical mile course, navigating the rocky peripheries of Pillsbury Sound and the island of St. John.

Among the fleet, six teams emerged victorious in their respective classes, with "Flying Jenny" leading the pack in the CSA 1 Class, which featured an exciting one-design fleet of Cape 31s. The anticipation built until the very last leg of the day's race, culminating in a thrilling finish that determined the overall champion.

"We knew whoever won would win the regatta," shared Rob Greenhalgh, tactician on the USA-based "Flying Jenny." He added, "It was a hard fight at the start, but winning it by being at the pin end was the key for us. The wind shift halfway through the course added to the challenge, yet we managed to cross the finish line a minute ahead of our competitors."

In the CSA 2 Class, Donald Nicholson's "Apollo" clinched the title, marking their third participation with a cherished victory. Nicholson attributed their success to "a well-prepared boat, fabulous crew, fair winds, good luck, and the magic of the STIR regatta." He promised, "We'll be back."

Meanwhile, Puerto Rico's Keki Figueroa steered his Melges 24 "Exodus" to victory in the CSA 3 Class, a win reminiscent of his past triumph in the Hobie class two decades prior. "My crew and I have been together for a long time. Watching the wind constantly gave us the advantage," Figueroa remarked following his first place finish.

Local sailor Lawrence Aqui and his crew on "Wild T'ing," dominated the CSA Non-Spinnaker Class. Aqui emphasized the importance of teamwork and local knowledge, which proved crucial in navigating the tricky waters around the islands.

The One-Design IC24 Class, the largest group with 15 boats, saw St. Thomas' Cy Thompson on "Bill T" defend his title successfully. "The conditions were unprecedented, but our crew's familiarity with each other made the difference," Thompson remarked.

The regatta also featured Hobie Waves racing, led by Chris Curreri on "OT the App," highlighting the diverse sailing talent across the event. Young sailors Will Zimmerman and Finn Hodgins showcased their skills as runners-up, promising a bright future for the sport.