

Semana Nautica hits the waves

By GERRY FALL

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One of Santa Barbara's most popular summer events commenced on Saturday at West Beach with the Semana Nautica U.S. Sabot Regatta, which featured close to 50 talented sailors, mostly ranging in age between seven and 15.

Under beautiful sunshine and relatively calm seas, the regatta was comprised of five races which took a little more than three and a half hours to complete.

An interesting twist to this year's kickoff to the 74th annual Semana Nautica Summer Sports Festival was the presence of Santa Barbara Yacht Club's racing director, Brad

Schaupert, who also served as the race director for the U.S. Sabot Regatta. He's only been on the job a week and a half.

"I guess the biggest challenge for me was having never seen the event before," Schaupert said. "I've come up here and I've coached, but I have yet to see many of these events that I'm running."

What Schaupert saw was a number of talented young sailors who had descended upon West Beach from all over the state to compete in three classes. A number of the them were from Santa Barbara — including 12-year-old Lucas Pierce — who had his sights set on a victory in the A Class until a slip-up at the end.

"I had a horrible last race," he said

with a smile after admitting that he still had a great time despite the outcome. "I slipped in my boat as I was rounding the mark and it was disappointing."

There to take top honors from Pierce was his friend, 10-year-old Patch Curtis, who said Lucas was one of the ones who got him into sailing.

"Lucas was ahead of me by three points and then I got in front of him when he slipped," said Curtis, who began sailing when he was six. "The wind was kind of shifty at first and then it got lighter."

Caden Scheiblaue competed in the B Class, and while the nine-year-old from Carpinteria didn't win, he

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MATT WIER / NEWS-PRESS

Competitors head back in from the Santa Barbara Channel during Saturday's Semana Nautica U.S. Sabot Regatta.

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MATT WIER / NEWS-PRESS

Competitors move away from the beach of the Santa Barbara Channel during the Semana Nautica regatta on Saturday afternoon, with the harbor in the distance.

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said he enjoyed the event because it allowed him to compete in the ocean course rather than the harbor, which is where sailors with little or no experience compete in the C Class.

"I love this event because you get to sail outside the harbor, which we don't usually do, and that's what makes it a fun regatta," Scheiblaue said. "One of the big things is that you have to shift with the wind and you have to adjust to it. If you don't you can capsize and get wet."

The regatta featured three fleets of sabots and two fleets of laser boats. Homer Smith, a member of the Santa Barbara Yacht Club, served as the regatta chairman.

Smith estimated that of the close to 50 racers, only five were adults.

"The adults were on the lasers, which is a trickier boat to sail," Smith said. "I can tell you we will probably have a lot of tired sailors who are going to come in and eat our good hamburgers pretty soon," Smith joked, as a few of the youngsters were making their way up the ramp to the Yacht Club at days end.

Jane Watkins, who is also a member of the Santa Barbara Yacht Club, was one of the adult supervisors on the race course.

"The conditions were perfect," Watkins said. "The sun came out early and it was good not to have it to windy with all the children sailors."

"I think they learned a lot out there today."

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