

# Fling fades in race

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One mistake: When the competition is so evenly matched, one mistake can be the difference between a victory and a runner-up finish to a rival. For the crew of Fling, that mistake was a spinnaker that got dipped in the ocean on the way up, and they were forced to watch as Fleur de Lis took the lead and held it long enough to claim first in the Harbor 20 fleet as part of the Santa Barbara Yacht Club's weekly Wet Wednesdays race.

Fling's spinnaker went into the water as the crew rounded the first mark and started to head upwind. Fling was the first to the mark, but the struggle with the chute left the boat, skippered by Scott Deardorff, struggling to pick up speed down wind. Fleur de Lis and Comfort Too both moved ahead, and Cardremmian came close as well.

"Basically about four of us were kind of battling it out," said Jane Watkins, part of Fling's crew along with Deardorff and Matt Willson. "We were the first ones to the mark, but our spinnaker went in the water as we were trying to get it up. Two boats passed us... But then we got our chute up right away and were battling all the way up and down."

Fleur de Lis finished in 51 minutes, 26 seconds, with Fling (52:02) close behind in second followed by

Cardremmian (52:13) and Comfort Too (53:11). For Fleur de Lis, the biggest moments came with its eponymous black and gold spinnaker puffed full of air on the windward legs of the race, such as the fateful moment around the first mark.

"We went around the mark behind Fling, and when that happened they gave us bad air so we had to tack to clear our air," said Bill Bench, part of Fleur de Lis' crew along with owner Al Salzer and Lori Kari. "We had to go out about three or four boat lengths and then tack back. We managed to get a little bit of a lift out there and stay up with Fling. We went to the wall here and tacked and then got another lift, and then we came out ahead of Fling right there. They had to dip us and they were on starboard tack and we were on port."

The Harbor 20 fleet is a group of small single-design ships. With no design advantage, it is up to the crews to make a difference in the race. Any mistake, and a crew must face the same fate as Fling, which watched its lead slip away.

Unfortunately for Fling's crew, it was a familiar boat passing them by. Fleur de Lis and Fling are consistently among the top finishers in the Harbor 20 fleet, and are frequently battling each other for first place.

"It's a competitive rivalry," Deardorff said. "We are always next to



each other. The boats are real close as far as speed goes, so we're always out there trying to learn tactics and anything we can do to try and differentiate each other from the other boat - a better start, better mark roundings, crew work, everything comes into play."

Perhaps it was the result of Fling's singular mistake, or perhaps it was a few strokes of luck, but Fleur de Lis got the best of the Harbor 20 rivalry on Wednesday. The crew can enjoy the victory for a week, but then it's back in the water in one of the most competitive fleets out of the Yacht Club.

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