

Schaupter rules Wet Wednesday

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When the first starting horn sounds from the deck at the Santa Barbara Yacht Club for the Wet Wednesday's yacht races, the sailors on the water take off toward their first mark. And while there is certainly a lot of work to be done on board, the rest of the race is a pretty straightforward and simple concept. But back on deck, race director Brad Schaupter and his crew are hard at work.

On Wednesday, Schaupter stood behind his laptop on the viewing deck at the Yacht Club, just as he does every Wednesday. With binoculars dangling from his neck, keys to the various marinas in the harbor dangling out of both pockets, a radio in his left hand and an air horn in his right, Schaupter looks the part of the man in charge.

Mainly, his task is ensuring that the crew helping him lower and raise the signal flags are on task - as he gives them countdowns and instructions for the prep stages and start times of each of the seven fleets.

"I can't just shout out at (the boats) if the radio fails," Schaupter said. "The only thing that really matters is the flags. Even the horns might fail, so

the flags are really, really important. That's what lets the competitors know when they're supposed to get ready to start and when they're starting."

Joining Schaupter on Wednesday were the father-daughter team of Scott and Emma Deardorff. Kathleen Baushke was also assisting, as she frequently does.

"This is a really good crew tonight, they really know their stuff," Schaupter said. "Some people come up though and they may sail with somebody on the rail, but don't really have the slightest clue what's going on. I think in this case it's a lot easier, but what I would typically have to do is have people run back and forth making sure that the competitors know the course - that's what the course placards are all about."

The majority of Schaupter's work is done before the race, as he determines which route each of the seven fleets will sail. He must consider the speed of the boats and how well they fare in various wind conditions, then map the route with the goal of having each fleet finish its course between 45 and 90 minutes.

While wind was not an issue on Wednesday, there were still hurdles for Schaupter to leap. The harbor was without electricity for the race, which meant

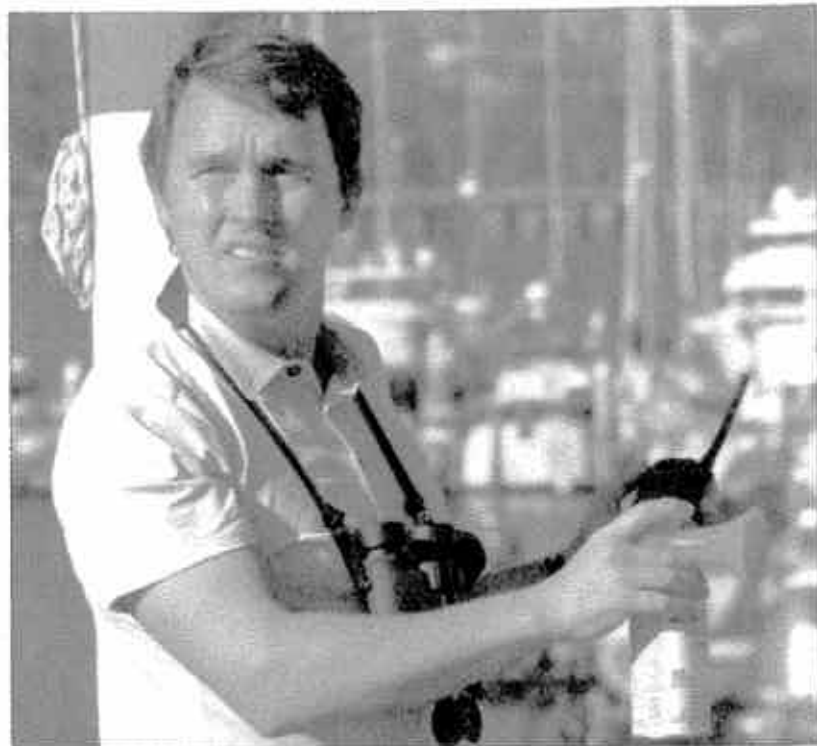
that boats not anchored in the marina could not be lowered into the water, which resulted in boats in the B, Melges 24 and J24 fleets missing the race.

"What affected us was the hoists weren't working," Schaupter said. "The boats that are about 24-25 feet or less, a lot of them are in the yard and couldn't get in the water. Since they couldn't be scored and I wanted to keep things fair, for those fleets I decided we were going to run fun races tonight. They don't count toward the fall series, and we're going to take our fun race in September and sort of swap those races."

As the yachts cross the finish line, Schaupter records their time and place and posts the results on sbcracing.org. The site is also for those looking to sail, but who don't have a boat, to get matched up with a captain. With many boats sitting in the harbor without enough crew members to compete, the listings on the site are a valuable resource.

"A lot of people are looking for crew even if they don't have experience," Schaupter said. "Back in the old days they used to sit along the wall here and say 'Hey! Hey! I want to go out,' but that takes a lot of guts to do that and this is a little bit easier."

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THOMAS KELSEY / NEWS-PRESS

Wet Wednesday race director Brad Schaupter surveys the scene around the harbor during Wednesday evening's action.