

2009 IDA LEWIS DISTANCE RACE: NEWS

Ida Lewis Distance Race

Highland Fling XI Challenges Titan XV, Lolita Plans a Comeback

NEWPORT, RI (July 15, 2009) -- Certain to make epic the fifth running of the Ida Lewis Distance Race, the captain of Irvine Laidlaw's (Monaco) new 90-foot Wally boat Highland Fling XI has issued a challenge to Tom Hill's (Puerto Rico) new 75-foot Reichel-Pugh designed Titan XV to show up and show its stuff at the event, set to begin off Newport, R.I., Friday, August 21. Hill, who took PHRF victory in the inaugural Ida Lewis Distance Race (2004) with one of his previous Titans, reportedly has accepted the challenge and will join Highland Fling XI and George David's (Hartford, Conn.) 90-foot Rambler as the largest boats entered.

The Ida Lewis Distance Race, which incorporates a 177 nm "Montauk" course and a 150 nm "Block Island" course for smaller boats, has won a reputation for being the perfectly "not so long" distance race that offers something for everyone, including classes for IRC, PHRF (including Cruising Spinnaker), One-Design (including NYYC Swan 42) and Double-Handed boats of 28 feet and longer. The event currently has 21 boats signed up, with on-line registration open through August 7. Hosted by Ida Lewis Yacht Club, it is a qualifier for the 2009 New England Lighthouse Series; Northern and Double-Handed Ocean Racing Trophies; and the US-IRC Gulf Stream Series.

According to Captain Xavier Mecoy, Highland Fling XI will be splashed only weeks prior to the start after spending 14 months building at Goetz Boats in Bristol. "We may not be 100% ready but we'll be there!" he said, describing the boat as totally breakthrough yet with a typically beautiful Wally interior and teak decks. "We've made reservations at the Clarke Cooke House for the next afternoon; we figured that was safe enough timing-wise."

With a start at 3 p.m. off Newport, the larger boats could very well make it back by the next morning, weather allowing. But the race is not all about the glamour boats with grand prix crews duking it out under IRC handicap; it is designed so that every kind of sailor and every kind of crew combination can enjoy the race.

For Frank Savage (Stamford, Conn.), owner of the Swan 56 Lolita, the PHRF Cruising Spinnaker Class was just the ticket for getting his winning crew back together after a hiatus from hard-core racing. "When we race we do it right, and we were very successful with Lolita from 2001 through 2004," said Savage, counting the Block Island Race, Rolex Swan American Regatta and Antigua Race Week among his favorite victories of the time. "We haven't had the crew together in a long time, so this will give us a chance to gel. It's great racing and cruising in this area, and I feel very comfortable in Newport. It's a real sailor's town."

Savage said he also will feel comfortable on the course, which includes turning marks at Castle Hill, Brenton Reef, Block Island, Montauk Point, Martha's Vineyard and Buzzards Tower on its way to a finish off the historic Ida Lewis Yacht Club in Newport Harbor.

Each boat is greeted at their finish by a crew of volunteers from Ida Lewis Yacht Club, powering alongside in one of the club's committee boats and bearing a congratulatory bottle of champagne. Since the finish line is sighted off the deck of the clubhouse, the boats that finish before midnight make an impressive show for families and friends of the sailors enjoying that night's Lobster Fest. It was from the yacht club's home on Lime Rock that the heroine Ida Lewis, the female keeper of the Lime Rock Lighthouse in the early 1800s, famously rowed her lifeboat to wherever a sailor was in need. Legend has it that, in daring rescues, she saved 18 lives, each represented by a single star on the Ida Lewis Yacht Club burgee.

Sponsors for the Ida Lewis Distance Race are Dockwise Yacht Transport, Mac Designs, Narragansett Beer, North Sails, the Rhode Island State Yachting Committee, and Vineyard Vines.

For more information, contact Dirk Johnson, info@ildistancerace.org, or go to www.ildistancerace.org for the Notice of Race and online entry (deadline is August 7, 2009).

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