

An Offshore Experience for Youth Sailors and a Challenge for All

NEWPORT, R.I. (March 28, 2011) - This summer, junior sailors will broaden their horizons - literally-as they escape the confines of Narragansett Bay to embark on an offshore adventure covering up to 177 nautical miles. The Organizing Committee of the Ida Lewis Distance Race introduced its Youth Challenge last year, and it was met with huge success when six boats out of a fleet of 35 signed up to compete. It will be repeated this year when the seventh edition of the Ida Lewis Distance Race starts Friday, August 19 and sends competitors on a choice of four coastal race courses between 104 nm and 177 nm over some of the most storied and beautiful sailing grounds in the world.



"The goal of the Youth Challenge is to introduce the junior sailing world to offshore sailing," said Event Chair Dirk Johnson (Newport, R.I.). "There is a whole new skill set that is needed to sail in an overnight race, and this is the perfect distance to get juniors onboard and excited without overdoing it." Johnson explained that the race attracts family cruisers as well as grand prix racers, offering classes for IRC, PHRF (featuring a cruising spinnaker class as well as the Youth Challenge

division), One Design and Double-Handed boats of 28 feet or longer.

"In somewhat the same vein as the Youth Challenge, the cruising spinnaker class aims at getting cruising boats without racing inventories out on the race course and experiencing overnight racing," added Johnson. "This is a great 'starter' class for folks without racing crew or equipment.

To qualify for the Youth Challenge, more than 40% of the crew must have reached their 14th birthday but not turn 20 prior to August 19, 2011. Teams may have junior crew members outside of those parameters; however, they will not count towards the youth component. Adults (minimum two aboard, one of whom must be designated as Captain) will make up the balance of the crew, but it is intended that they serve only in a supervisory capacity. Teams must be registered under the flag of a US SAILING yacht club or community sailing program. All youth sailors will be required to attend a brief informational meeting the evening before the race (participants of all ages welcome) and will be strongly encouraged to attend the [Storm Trysail Junior Safety at Sea Seminar](#), which will be held in Newport, R.I., the Wednesday prior to the race.

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"I think it's a great thing to get kids involved in offshore sailing," said Greg Manning (Wickford R.I.), who hosted a youth-crewed team at last year's Ida Lewis Distance Race (on his X-41 *Sarah*) representing East Greenwich Yacht Club, which won the Youth Challenge and placed third in the PHRF division. "It's a good life lesson and teaches independence, self reliance and teamwork. When this opportunity came up last year I took it."

Manning plans to return to the Ida Lewis Distance Race this year as well as compete in the Annapolis to Newport, Block Island Race Week presented by Rolex and the Marblehead to Halifax Race. "I love sailing with kids because they love to learn, are always positive and have lots of energy. I try to get kids involved in all of the regattas that *Sarah* races in," he said. Ron O'Hanley (Boston, Mass.) has been competing in the Ida Lewis Distance Race (on his Cookson 50 *Privateer*) since its inception and placed second last year in the IRC division. "We do a lot of distance races on *Privateer*," said O'Hanley. "The Ida Lewis Distance Race is definitely a thinking person's competition. Though the logistics are simple, it's very challenging with lots of navigation choices to be made."

O'Hanley will include the Ida Lewis Distance Race along with the International Rolex Regatta, Annapolis to Newport Race and New York Yacht Club Annual Regatta on his schedule of major regattas for the year. He has brought the same core crew with him every year for competition but sees the Youth Challenge as a bright future for up-and-coming sailors. "There are so many barriers that keep junior sailors off the water," he said, "and anything we can do to attract young people to the sport it great."

The Ida Lewis Distance Race is a qualifier for the 2011 New England Lighthouse Series (PHRF); Northern and Double-Handed Ocean Racing Trophies (IRC); and the US-IRC Gulf Stream Series. On-line registration is open through August 6.

For more information, visit <http://ildistancerace.org/2011/index.php> or contact Youth Challenge Coordinator Joe Cooper, (401) 965-6006, bushranger147@gmail.com or Andy Dickinson, 401-423-0600, andy@jby.com There is also a Facebook Page for the Ida Lewis Distance Race.

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Photo by Amory Ross

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