

Ida Lewis Distance Race Offshore Racing Fun for All Ages

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ida Lewis Distance Race 2012

Offshore Racing Fun for All Ages



NEWPORT, R.I. (May 21, 2012) – The Ida Lewis Distance Race will be swarming with fresh talent this year as it welcomes back the Youth Challenge – for sailors between the ages of 14 and 20 – for a third year and adds both a college and high school team to the roster. In its eighth edition, the race – open to IRC, PHRF (including Cruising Spinnaker and the Youth Challenge division), One Design and Double-Handed boats of 28 feet and longer – will start on Friday, August 17, 2012 off Fort Adams in

Narragansett Bay and send competitors on a choice of four coastal race courses (with distances of 104 to 177 nautical miles) that cover some of the most storied and beautiful sailing grounds in the world. With turning marks at Castle Hill, Brenton Reef, Block Island, Montauk Point, Martha's Vineyard and Buzzards Tower, the race ends with a signature champagne finish inside Newport Harbor off the historic Ida Lewis Yacht Club.

“This is one of the few overnight events that gives youth the opportunity to race head-to-head against some of the best race boats in the world,” said Race Chair Dirk Johnson (Newport, R.I.). “When teenage crews have a chance to see, in real time, how an America’s Cup or Volvo skipper or navigator tackles the same challenges of wind and tide as they are facing, the learning curve is straight up.”

Johnson noted that George David’s (Hartford, Conn.) 90-foot Rambler is one of the most renowned entries that will have veteran ocean racers onboard as crew, and the SUNY Maritime Offshore Team is an exciting example of college sailors represented at the regatta.

“Getting youth under the age of 25 into big boat racing is critical to the future of the sport,” said the coach of SUNY Maritime Offshore Team Ron Weiss (Throggs Neck, N.Y.), who donated his Frers 45 Crazy Horse to the college in 2010 to help ramp up enthusiasm for ocean racing among cadets. “This the perfect showcase event for us aboard Crazy Horse, and it will be a great way to toughen up the crew and give them unique experiences.”

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Weiss added that this is the first year for SUNY Maritime to race offshore competitively. It also has registered to sail in the Storm Trysail Club 67th Block Island Race, the Newport Bermuda Race and The (Stamford, Conn.) Vineyard Race. "Doing a race is one thing; doing it competitively is a whole other level of work, and doing it to win is at another level of complexity," said Weiss. "Logistics and project management really come to the forefront during a big boat offshore program."

In addition to the entry of a full college team, a high school team from Wakefield, R.I. -- the Prout School Sailing Team -- has temporarily swapped out training in its fleet of 420s for practice sessions aboard an Outbound 44, which they will enter in the Ida Lewis Distance Race. "It's a totally different skill set than when you're on a dinghy," said freshman Kohl Peasley (Wakefield, R.I.) who will be taking on his first-ever offshore excursion. "I think it will definitely help our team bond and stay in sync."

Joe Cooper (Middletown, R.I.), who coaches the sailors during the school year, will also be onboard to help with the team's transition into big boats. "Team cohesiveness is pretty key," said Cooper. "Skills and knowledge can be learned, but teamwork must be built over time, and this group of high school students has already mastered it."

The 69-foot custom sloop Gracie, with Skip Kelly (Burke, Vt.) as its captain, will be defending the Youth Challenge title this year after taking home the Arent H. Kits van Heyningen Trophy in 2012 with 12 junior sailors onboard.

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 17, 2012. Teams may have junior crew members outside of those parameters; however, they will not count towards the youth component. 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. on Thursday, August 2, 2012.

Starting Line sponsors for the 2012 Ida Lewis Distance Race are New England Boatworks, Newport Shipyard and North Sails. Contributing sponsors are Bud Light, Dockwise Yacht Transport, Goslings Rum, Flint Audio Video, Sea Gear Uniforms, Rig Pro Southern Spars and Zblok. The event is a qualifier for the New England Lighthouse Series (PHRF); the Northern and Double-Handed Ocean Racing Trophies (IRC); and the US-IRC Gulf Stream Series.

For more information, visit www.ildistancerace.org or contact Race Chairman Dirk Johnson, RaceChairman@ildistancerace.org, 401-965-9189.

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For Details regarding sponsorship levels please contact:

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