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LIFEGUARDS / ABSENCE OF BILKINS, MURPHY OPENS UP NORTH WILDWOOD ~~SWIM~~ Row

August 18, 1997 Publication: Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ) Page: D5 Word Count: 641

Unlike in recent years, the North Wildwood Around The Island Row will be a wide-open race with no clear favorite. Why? Because Wildwood Crest Beach Patrol oarsmen Max Bilkins and Bick Murphy, the undisputed kings of the race, will not compete in the event Tuesday morning.

The 21-mile counter-clockwise row around Wildwood island will begin with a floating start at 7:30 a.m. at 15th Avenue beach in North Wildwood.

The 45-year-old Bilkins had a hip-replacement operation over the winter and has not rowed competitively this season. Murphy, 38, won't compete either. Bilkins and Murphy have won the Around The Island Row five times, including four of the previous five years.

"With Max and Bick not in the race, there are a lot of different crews that might win it," race director Charlie Iepson said. "There are some older crews that are still around and keep coming back year after year. Then there's some young boys from Ventnor and other patrols who will give it a shot."

From 15th Avenue, the 36 crews will go north to the Hereford Inlet in the ocean, under the Stone Harbor Bridge and then under the Grassy Sound Bridge entering the backbay. The race continues as the boats proceed south past the West Wildwood Train Trestle and the Rio Grande Bridge.

After the crews go under the Cape May Bridge, they proceed through the Cold Spring Inlet at the bottom of Wildwood. The final sprint in the ocean completes the circuit as the boats go back to the 15th Avenue finish line.

Ventnor alumni rowers Dennis Funk and George Miller, South Jersey doubles row champions way back in 1973-75, will go again today. Funk and Miller hold the meet record of 2 hours, 56 minutes, 6 seconds, set in 1987. They have rowed the event every year since and have usually been among the top five. They were third last year in 3:05.31, 1 minute and 3 seconds behind first place Bilkins and Murphy.

Ventnor's South Jersey champion Matt Guerrieri, second around the island last year with brother Mike Guerrieri, will team this year with John Hazlett. Also from Ventnor will be the twin-brother team of Andrew Funk and David Funk, Dennis Funk's 19-year-old sons.

Speaking of brothers, Margate will feature two sets from the same family. John Swift and Joe Swift will row together. Older brother Jim Swift, a Margate alumni, will team with Steve Swift.

Cape May's Steve Mogck and Jim Wadlow, Around The Island Row winners in 1994, should contend today. Craig Whitehead and Mark Wachlin of Avalon, fourth a year ago, might be there, too. Fifth in 1996 were Jim Mason and Scott Jones, another baby boomer Ventnor alumni crew.

Other good crews are Rick Greco and Pat Trinsey of Wildwood Crest, North Wildwood's Romolo Forcino and Kevin Gross, B.J. Fox and Mike Alton of Atlantic City, and Longport's Mike McGrath and Matt Kelm.

"Without a doubt these guys are great athletes," Iepson said. "Competing in this event takes great endurance and stamina. A lot of the guys here have rowed this race before and they know what it takes."

LINEUPS

ATLANTIC CITY - B.J. Fox-Mike Alton. AVALON - Craig Whitehead-Mark Wachlin; Coleman Joyce-Joe Galone; Brian McCarthy-Tom Murphy. BRIGANTINE - Joe Corcoan-Jeff Szeker; Sean Daley-Bruce Hunt. CAPE MAY - Steve Mogck-Jim Wadlow; Steve Kwalik-Ed Fagan; Bob Cornell-Dan Kaufman; Rod Pierce-Tim Fiocchi; Marty Franco-Tom Frederick. CAPE MAY POINT - Derek Wanner-Pam Hasse. LONGPORT - Mike McGrath-Matt Kelm; Jim Grimley-Pat Armstrong. MARGATE - Rich Kugel-Greg Smallwood; John Swift-Joe Swift; Jim Swift-Steve Swift. NORTH WILDWOOD - Romolo Forcino-Kevin Gross; Tom Ogden-Tony Gambescia; Kevin Quinn-Lew Ostrander. OCEAN CITY - Bob Amsler-Chris Denn. STONE HARBOR - Charles O'Connor-Chris Buckley. VENTNOR - Matt Guerrieri-John Hazlett; Andrew Funk-David Funk; Tom Grimley-Keith Grimley; Dennis Funk-George Miller; Scott Jones-Jim Mason. WILDWOOD - Steve Stocks-Tom Killian; Ed Schneider-Tom Reynolds; Steve McGuinn-Pat Murray; Bill Quinn-Michelle Busza; Ed McGinley-Mark Priest. WILDWOOD CREST - Rick Greco-Pat Trinsey; Mike D'Amico-Tom Pietrzak. UPPER TOWNSHIP - Chris McCann-Brian O'Shea. UNNATACHED - Jim McManus-Mike Regosch.

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LIFEGUARDS / AVALON COMES FROM BEHIND FOR VICTORY

August 20, 1997 Publication: Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ) Page: D1 Word Count: 1108

Oarsmen Craig Whitehead and Mark Wachlin of the Avalon Beach Patrol have emerged this year as one of the better crews in the South Jersey Chiefs Association. They were second in the Dutch Hoffman Memorials, third in the Cape May County Championships, and second at the David Kerr Memorials.

Whitehead and Wachlin erased their no-victory status in dramatic fashion Tuesday morning as they charged from well behind to win the North Wildwood Around The Island Row. With a stiff breeze and a strong current against the rowers in the final ocean stretch, all the times were relatively slow, and the Avalon pair was clocked in 3 hours, 16 minutes, 7 seconds.

Another problem is a big sandbar in the Hereford Inlet at the top of Wildwood island that all the rowers had to go around for the second year in a row. Some of the oarsmen estimated that it added an extra mile to the counterclockwise 21-mile race.

After the final turn back into the ocean at the Cold Spring Inlet at the bottom of Wildwood, the Avalon boat emerged from apparent non-contention, and passed the lead crews one by one.

Whitehead and Wachlin crossed the finish line at 15th Avenue beach 70 yards ahead of the

makeshift team of Margate's John Swift and Ventnor's Eric Funk, the South Jersey singles row champion. Jeff Szeker and Joe Corcoran of Brigantine were in third place, two boatlengths behind Swift and Funk, and fourth-place Chris McCann and Brian O'Shea of Upper Township trailed Brigantine by 120 yards.

"We were fourth in this race last year and handled the ocean real well," said bowman Whitehead, a 26-year-old teacher and Temple University graduate. "We figured we could do the same this time. We stayed pretty much behind the leaders and as soon as we got in the ocean we got going. We knew we weren't far from them. We had been drinking water (during breaks) and preparing to catch them."

"We were about eighth or ninth after the rock pile (the Cold Spring Inlet) and I figured we'd catch some of them but I didn't think we would catch them all. After we caught the lead pack, we looked back and Margate (Swift and Funk) was still 200 yards ahead. We caught them at about the Wildwood Ferris wheel."

Whitehead won the South Jersey Lifeguard doubles title 1991-93 with original partner Mike Cras.

"I felt a little pressure taking over for Mike Cras with Craig because they won three South Jersey titles, but I tried not to let it bother me," Wachlin, a 20-year-old University of Pennsylvania rower, said. "It feels great to win a big race, especially since we didn't do too well at the South Jerseys (seventh)."

With perennial favorites Max Bilkins and Bick Murphy not in the race, a mad scramble for top honors was expected, and it certainly materialized. Cape May's Steve Mogck and Jim Wadlow, Island Row winners in 1994, led for half the race, showing the way at the Hereford Inlet, Stone Harbor Bridge and Rio Grande Bridge checkpoints.

But in the backbay, Cape May was overtaken by McCann and O'Shea. Then the Upper Township crew stopped for a water break before the Cape May Bridge and was passed by Wildwood's Steve Stocks and Tom Killian. Several boats sprinted at the end of the rock pile, and Swift and Funk came out of it on top, and led for several miles.

John Swift's regular partner is brother Joe, but Joe broke a bone in his right foot doing a rescue on Saturday. "Eric (Funk) was out surfing with my brother Steve at 9 o'clock last night and then

dropped Steve off," John Swift said. "Eric and I talked in the driveway and we decided to row together. We never rowed together before."

RESULTS

1. Avalon (Craig Whitehead-Mark Wachlin) 3:16:07; 2. Margate (John Swift-Eric Funk) 3:16:57; 3. Brigantine (Joe Corcoran-Jeff Szeker) 3:17:06; 4. Upper Township (Chris McCann-Brian O'Shea) 3:19:33; 5. Ventnor alumni (Dennis Funk-George Miller) 3:20:06; 6. Wildwood (Steve Stocks-Tom Killian) 3:20:46; 7. North Wildwood (Romolo Forcino-Kevin Gross) 3:20:59; 8. Ventnor (Matt Guerrieri-John Hazlett) 3:21:52; 9. Cape May (Steve Mogck-Jim Wadlow) 3:22:29; 10. Atlantic City (Mike Alton-B.J. Fox) 3:23:22; 11. Margate (Jim Swift-Steve Swift) 3:24:41; 12. Ocean City (Bob Amsler-Chris Denn) 3:25:06; 13. Longport (Mike McGrath-Matt Kelm) 3:26:16; 14. Ventnor alumni (Scott Jones-Jim Mason) 3:26:41; 15. Rich Kugel-Greg Smallwood) 3:28:38; 16. Longport (Pat Armstrong-Jim Grimley) 3:29:43; 17. Wildwood Crest (Ron Ayres-Terry McGovern) 3:30:59; 18. Wildwood (Steve McGuinn-Pat Murray) 3:32:05; 19. Ventnor (Andrew Funk-David Funk) 3:33:19; 20. Wildwood Crest (Tom Pietzak-Mike D'Amico) 3:35:10; 21. Cape May (Steve Kwalik-Ed Fagan) 3:37:18; 22. Ventnor (Tom Grimley-Keith Grimley) 3:37:42; 23. Avalon (Brian McCarthy-Tom Murphy) 3:38:10; 24. Ventnor (Ned Eissler-Judge Cascioto) 3:39:45; 25. North Wildwood (Tom Ogden-Tony Gambescia) 3:41:11; 26. Cape May (Tom Frederick-Marty Franco) 3:42:26; 27. Wildwood (Ed McGinley-Marc Priest) 3:42:48; 28. Wildwood (Ed Schneider-Tom Reynolds) 3:44:46; 29. Avalon (Coleman Joyce-Joe Galone) 3:45:34; 30. Wildwood Crest (Rick Greco-Pat Trinsey) 3:45:48; 31. Wildwood (Bill Quinn-Michelle Busza) 3:48:18; 32. Ocean City (Sonny Rutkowski-Sara Griffith) 3:49:57; 33. Harvey Cedars (Bill Bart-Mike Weiler) 3:50:54; 34. Cape May (Rod Pierce-Tim Focchi) 3:56:52; 35. Stone Harbor (Charles O'Connor-Chris Buckley) 3:57:38; 36. Cape May (Bob Cornell-Dan Kaufman) 4:01:41; 37. Cape May Point (Derek Wanner-Pam Hasse) 4:07:38; 38. North Wildwood (Lew Ostrander-Kevin Quinn) 4:10:33; 39. Brigantine (Sean Daley-Bruce Hunt) 4:14:07; 40. North Wildwood (Marty Hagan-Bill Ciavarelli) 4:30:00; 41. Wildwood alumni (Jim McManus-Mike Regosch) no time; DNF - Cape May (Brent Tracey-Clint Tracey).

CHAMPIONS

1997 - Craig Whitehead-Mark Wachlin, Avalon 3:16:07

1996 - Max Bilkins-Bick Murphy, Wildwood Crest 3:04:28

1995 - Max Bilkins-Bick Murphy, Wildwood Crest 2:57:48

1994 - Steve Mogck-Jim Wadlow, Cape May 2:59:50

1993 - Max Bilkins-Bick Murphy, Wildwood Crest 3:04:50

1992 - Max Bilkins-Bick Murphy, Wildwood Crest 3:10:15

1991 - Bob McGinty-Cliff Murray, Ventnor alumni 3:03:49

1990 - Ted Evans-Chuck Dunn, Ocean City 3:03:50

1989 - John Kelley-Stuart Grant, Margate 3:00:08

1988 - Ron Kirk-Chuck Dunn, Ocean City 2:59:34

1987 - Dennis Funk-George Miller, Ventnor alumni 2:56:06

1986 - Bill Sieck-Dan O'Malley, Avalon (race course shortened)

1985 - Max Bilkins-Bick Murphy, Wildwood Crest 3:07:08

1984 - Tom Morrison-John Millar, Ocean City (no times kept)

1983 - Ron Kirk-John Herron, Ocean City 2:57:05

1982 - Rick Shoyer-Tom Morrison, Ocean City

1981 - Dan O'Malley-Pete Soderman, Avalon

1980 - Dave Kerr-Dan O'Malley, Avalon

1979 - Max Bilkins-Dave Koper, Wildwood Crest

1978 - Max Bilkins-John Greenwood, Wildwood Crest

1977 - Jim Troy-Harry Zander, North Wildwood

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Staff photos by Danny Drake

group of boats moves toward the Stone Harbor Bridge in the North Wildwood Around the Island Row.

Avalon comes from behind for victory



Supporters gather on a bridge to cheer on their favorite boats.

-1997-

■ Craig Whitehead and Mark Wachlin team up to give Avalon a victory after a series of near misses this season.

By GUY GARGAN
For The Press

NORTH WILDWOOD — Oarsmen Craig Whitehead and Mark Wachlin of the Avalon Beach Patrol have emerged this year as one of the better crews in the South Jersey Chiefs Association.

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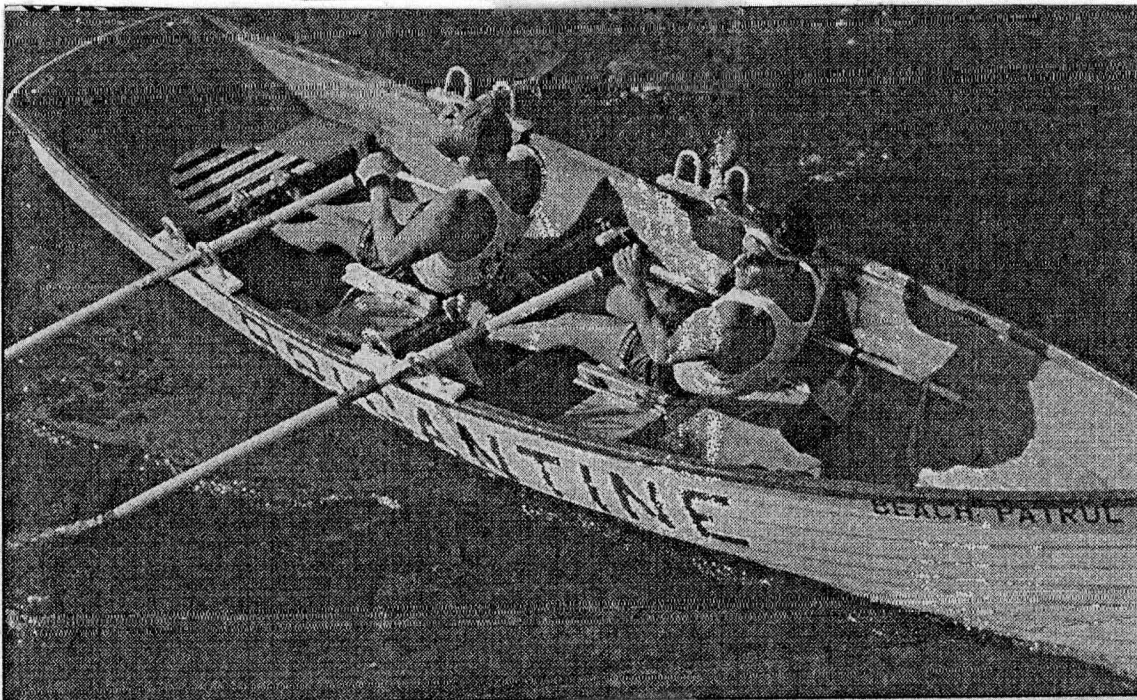
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Staff photos by Danny Drake

One of the Brigantine teams nears the Stone Harbor Bridge in the Around the Island Row

Row

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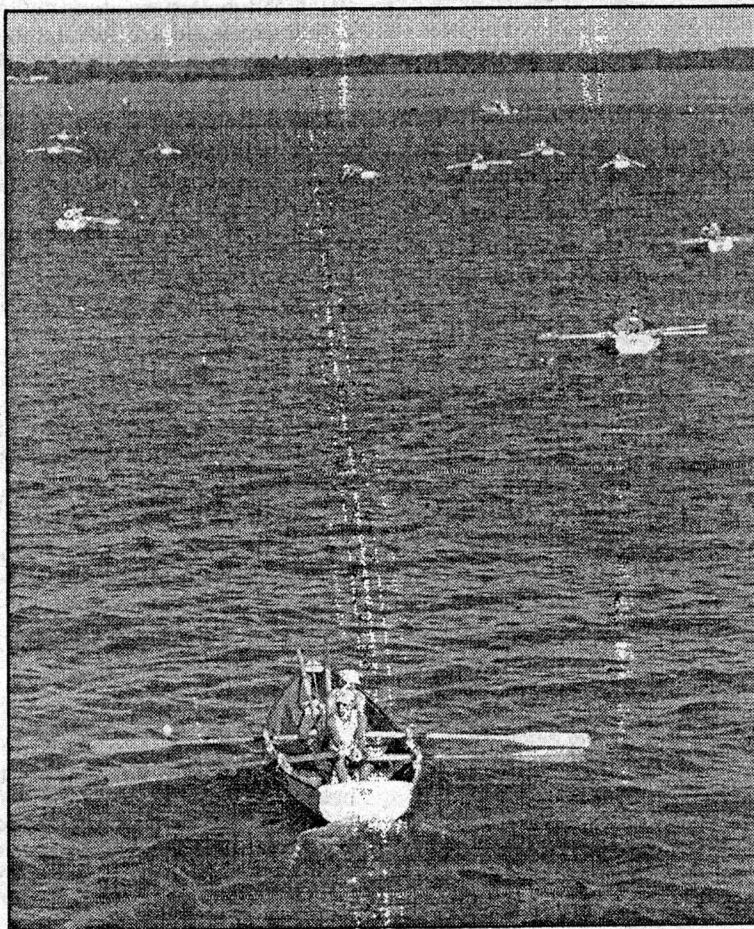
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Rowers head toward Grassy Sound on their way back to the ocean.

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