

Lifeguard races / Around the Island Row Wednesday in Wildwoods

Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ) - Tuesday, August 14, 2012

Author: GUY GARGAN Staff Writer

Some of the top area lifeguard and alumni rowers will get a 7 a.m. start Wednesday in the 37th annual Bud Tarbotton Memorial North Wildwood Beach Patrol Around The Island Row.

The 20-mile race begins at 1st and Surf avenues in North Wildwood and goes in a counter-clockwise direction around Wildwood island. The finish line is at the 15th Avenue beach in North Wildwood.

The doubles crews in lifeguard surfboats row first through Hereford Inlet and under the Stone Harbor Bridge at the top of Wildwood. They continue through the back bay and under the Cape May Bridge. Then it's on to the Cold Spring Inlet at the bottom of the island. The race proceeds into the ocean and goes up through Wildwood Crest and Wildwood to 15th Avenue.

"A lot of the crews this year are guys who don't always row together," said race director Bill Ciavarelli, a North Wildwood Beach Patrol captain. "But they're always training and it wouldn't take much for them to do well together. A lot of these crews are geared for long-distance racing."

The Wildwood Crest team of Brendan Cunningham and Terry McGovern won last year in their first island row together in 2 hours, 49 minutes, 11 seconds. They'll be back, along with the alumni crew of Carl Smallwood Jr. and B.J. Fox. Smallwood and Fox won the race in 2008 and 2009 and took third last year.

The most obvious makeshift crew is Margate's Chuck Gowdy and Ventnor's Mike Tripician. Gowdy won the South Jersey singles row title on Sunday in Ocean City, and Tripician won the doubles row with partner David Funk.

Funk will row with Ventnor alumnus George Miller. Dennis Funk, David's father, is Miller's longtime rowing partner, but the elder Funk is not competing this year.

Other crews include Avalon's Craig Whitehead and Matt Wolf, Wildwood Crest's Max Bilkins and Bick Murphy, and Cape May's Geoff Rife and Jim Wadlow. Upper Township's Wayne MacMurray will row with Wildwood alumnus Bill Kindle.

The event honors the late Tarbotton, who founded the race in 1976 while a member of the North Wildwood City Council.
Contact Guy Gargan: 609-272-7210 ggargan@pressofac.com

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Lifeguard races / Defending champs win around island row

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Wildwood Crest guards Brendan Cunningham and Terry McGovern win in 2 hours, 38 minutes.

The crew of Brendan Cunningham and Terry McGovern pulled away from a strong field to win the Bud Tarbotton Memorial North Wildwood Beach Patrol Around The Island Row on Wednesday morning.

This time it wasn't a surprise.

The Wildwood Crest lifeguards became a team last year and pulled an upset win in 2011 over many experienced crews in their first race around the island together.

That victory made the Crest crew one of the favorites Wednesday, and Cunningham and McGovern made a move to the front midway through the race. They won the 20-mile row by 120 yards at the 15th Avenue beach finish line in a fast time of 2 hours, 38 minutes.

The lifeguard alumni crew of Carl Smallwood Jr. and B.J. Fox made a good sprint in the final ocean leg to get second in 2:39.12. Ventnor's David Funk combined with alumnus George Miller to place third in 2:39.26.

"It feels great to win it again," said McGovern, 38, the stern. "It always feels great just to complete it, and to win it is just a bonus."

Cunningham and McGovern took the lead before the crews went under the Cape May Bridge.

"The difference this year is that you were against the wind in the bay, but after you turned the rock pile (the Cold Spring Inlet at the bottom of Wildwood island), the ocean had flatter water with a tailwind," McGovern said. "The ocean was rough last year."

"Another big difference is that we had a crew of South Jersey champions (Margate's Chuck Gowdy and Ventnor's Mike Tripician) in the race, and they jumped out from the start. Carl and B.J. are always tough, and we knew (David) Funk and George Miller would be good. We had a lot of good crews."

The Around The Island Row has a course with several unusual aspects over 20 miles, and it usually helps to have rowed the race a number of times.

But in contrast to that, Cunningham, 24, has won the race in his only two attempts. The third-year lifeguard, an assistant men's crew coach at Washington College (Md.), thought the win this year was harder.

"We had to keep our composure when we were behind, and move when we needed to," said Cunningham. "You learn different things every race, and Terry and I learned a lot in the (South Jersey) sprint races this year. It feels good to win it for the team."

The Crest crew's best finish in a beach race was a second place in the doubles row at the Kerr Memorials in Avalon on Aug. 7.

Tripician won the South Jersey doubles row title with David Funk on Sunday in Ocean City, while Gowdy took the singles row. Without a chance to practice together, Gowdy and Tripician led for about half the race before eventually finishing fifth. Gowdy's only other race around the island was about 10 years ago.

"We gave it our best effort, and we felt good in the backbay," said Gowdy, 29. "It's tough to tell if I'll do it again. I'd need better preparation. These guys are amazing athletes and I give them all the credit in the world."

Smallwood, a Margate Beach Patrol alumnus, and Fox, a former lifeguard in Atlantic City and Longport, overtook Funk and Miller in the ocean and beat them by four boatlengths.

"We could never get settled or comfortable till we were in the ocean," said Smallwood, 41. "It was one of those days."

Fox, 39, the stern, added, "I thought we had too much energy left at the end. We should have made a move earlier."

Miller's longtime rowing partner is Dennis Funk, David's father. But Dennis Funk had an operation in May and David rowed with Miller instead. They practiced several times.

"I thought (we had) a really strong race," said David Funk, 34. "We put a lot of miles in."

Former Ventnor lifeguard Ed Harrold, 52, rowed with 16-year-old daughter Ellen. Race officials said it was the first father-daughter crew in the history of the race.

They finished 21st and last in 3:14.13.

"It felt amazing," Ellen Harrold said. "My goal was just to finish. I think I'd do it again."

Contact Guy Gargan: 609-272-7210 ggargan@pressofac.com
 RESULTS

1. Wildwood Crest (Brendan Cunningham-Terry McGovern) 2:38.00; 2. Margate alumnus-Atlantic City/Longport alumnus (Carl Smallwood Jr.-B.J. Fox) 2:39.12; 3. Ventnor-Ventnor alumnus (David Funk-George Miller) 2:39.26; 4. Avalon (Erich Wolf-Craig Whitehead) 2:49.49; 5. Margate-Ventnor (Chuck Gowdy-Mike Tripician) 2:40.51; 6. Cape May-Cape May alumnus (Geoff Rife-Jim Wadlow) 2:41.10; 7. Cape May (Chris Vitese-Anthony Onimus) 2:41.46; 8. Upper Township-Wildwood alumnus (Wayne MacMurray-Bill Kindle) 2:44.03; 9. Margate alumnus-Ventnor alumnus (Jim Swift-Scott Jones) 2:44.32; 10. Wildwood Crest (Matt Welles-Scott Wandel) 2:44.56; 11. Wildwood (Brandon Joyce-Tim Strybuc) 2:45.38; 12. Wildwood (Tom McLaughlin-Steve McGuinn) 2:45.52; 13. Cape May (Steve Kowalik-Ed Giordano) 2:46.20; 14. Wildwood Crest (Max Bilkins-Bick Murphy) 2:46.49; 15. Wildwood Crest (John Steiger-Eugene Litynski) 2:47.40.

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