

An interview with Richard Wade about the Flying Scot Wife Husband Championship



by David Schmidt 19 Sep 08:00 PDT
September 29-October 1, 2023



Racecourse action at the Flying Scot Wife-Husband Championship © the Flying Scot Wife-Husband Championship

Rare is the One Design boat that offers great competition when sailed in multiple crew configurations, but it's fair to say that the Flying Scot has earned its place on this list. The boat was designed in 1958 by Sandy Douglas, the same designer who created the Thistle and the lesser-known Highlander, and it quickly started delivering grins when sailing off-the-breeze angles.

Not surprisingly, the boat caught on in popularity, and fleets formed across the country.

Along the way, it was discovered that the boat excelled at being sailed by different numbers of crewmembers. For example, some teams sail with three hands, others with just two. But, perhaps most impressively, the class has a long history of supporting a Woman's North American Championship, as well as a Wife-Husband Championship.

This latter regatta caught my attention, so I checked in with Richard Wade, who is serving as the regatta's chair, to learn more.

Can you please tell us a bit about the history and culture of the Flying Scot Wife-Husband Championship?

From the Flying Scot's beginning in 1957 couples have been able to compete well against three-person



Flying Scot racecourse action - photo: Talbot Wilson

During a 30th Anniversary - Ohio District Championship, the Regatta Chairman, Sandy Eustis, created a separate Division he wanted to call the Husband-Wife Nationals. He asked sailmaker and Scot North American Champion Greg Fisher to come up with an appropriate perpetual trophy. Greg handed the responsibility over to his wife, somewhat last-minute we hear, and she had it engraved Wife-Husband.

The regatta then became more of a celebration of wives sailing with their husbands. As time passed, more and more women took the helm and their husbands crewed for them.

What kind of sailors is one likely to encounter at this regatta?

Experience often comes with age, so as expected, many of our teams will be retired. They travel extensively to regattas well away from their home clubs and have RVs, enjoy tent camping or arrange to stay with host club members in their homes.

What kinds of competition levels can one expect to encounter at the Flying Scot Wife-Husband

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Flying Scot racecourse action - photo: Talbot Wilson

about wife-husband teams?

The competitors at the Flying Scot Wife-Husband [Championship] will have a very broad range of skill levels. Many were collegiate sailors, some with Olympic experience, a few even with World Championships to their name and America's Cup participation.

However, just as many were introduced to sailing after taking a job and starting a family, and their experience might only involve club racing on Sunday afternoons.

Interestingly, some of that latter group have developed great sailing skills, often because of shared teachings from that other group.

Lots of classes hold championship regattas, but the Flying Scot class is unique in that it holds a Women's North America Championship as well as the Flying Scot Wife-Husband Championship. Can you please tell us about the culture in the class that drives these less-than-ordinary championship level events? Also, do regatta participants actually have to be married to each other to compete, or are the rules a bit relaxed in terms of just ensuring a mixed-sex crew?

The Flying Scot Class has been led by men and women at all Board positions for many years. It has promoted Women's, Junior's, Senior's, Special Olympics and Parent/Child team competition in their own events.

The Flying Scot sailboat has been selected numerous times for US Sailing Championships such as the Adam's Cup, Mallory Cup and Championship of Champions. Each of these competitions has their own unique criterion to participate.

The Wife-Husband Regatta does require the couple to be married, but that might just be a further test of patience and endurance.



Flying Scot racecourse action - photo: Talbot Wilson

What kind of weather conditions are common on the Coosa River in late September? What are the best-case and worst-case scenarios?

Birmingham Sailing Club (BSC) is on Logan Martin Lake, an Alabama Power Company hydro-electric project in central Alabama that was completed in 1964. The landscape is pine-tree covered ridges, major river systems, and large farm fields.

Summers are hot and humid with afternoon thunderstorms. When remnants of Gulf Coast hurricanes press inland or early Fall cold fronts appear unexpectedly, the weather conditions can change dramatically.

Without the influence of these major weather systems, September-October conditions are usually dry with temperature highs in the mid-80s and light to moderate winds (5 to 10 mph). Late-season hurricanes or early season cold fronts can reduce daily highs to the low-70s, bring occasional rain and wind in the 15 to 20 mph range.

How big of a role does local knowledge play on a river that also involves lakes, bends, islands, inlets, and what looks (from Google maps) like a bunch a geographical features?

As you mentioned, Logan Martin Lake is a reservoir on the Coosa River, so it is winding with lots of coves and a few islands.

However, the sailing area for the regatta will be immediately outside the BSC harbor in a large basin just above the dam. All course marks will be visible from the Starting Line and the layout will avoid shallow spots, river bends or islands.

Current is almost non-existent even during river flood conditions or power plant operation.

What might be considered local knowledge is just the classical, lake sailor's ability to read the onshore and offshore wind. Most teams competing in this regatta will have an equal understanding of this.

What's the scene like, once the boats have sailed back ashore? Do you guys have evening festivities planned?

The host clubs for both the Women's and Wife-Husband Regattas focus on the onshore social aspect of the event. These regattas are scheduled over weekends and the Entry Fee typically involves all-inclusive meals, beverages, giveaways, [and] evening entertainment, and extra effort is given to provide lodging to all out-of-towners in club members' homes.

At this year's Flying Scot Wife-Husband National Regatta, [the] Birmingham Sailing Club will provide breakfasts, lunches, Steak or Salmon Saturday evening dinner, Happy Hour snacks, beverages and live music entertainment. Sometimes-friendly game competitions are arranged to allow people to really get to know each other and share funny experiences.

Of course, being in the Deep South, there will always be a TV on in the corner for college football.

The outdoor settings have covered patio spaces for smaller group conversation around fire pits.

Can you please tell us about any efforts that you and the other regatta organizers have made to try to lower the regatta's environmental footprint or otherwise green-up the regatta?

We probably will not be a host club that would be nominated as 'poster examples for Environmental Concerns '.

Yes, we love the environment, our lake, and our neighbors in the community, and recycling is an objective, but no local service [exists that] supports that collection.

Is there anything else that you'd like to add, for the record?

An interesting thing about the Flying Scot Class is that it offers a One-Time Exemption to non-Flying



Flying Scot racecourse action - photo: Talbot Wilson

Host clubs are encouraged to offer Flying Scots for loan or charter to non-owners.

Some simple paperwork is involved and minor fees to join, but this really opens up the events to bring in people that might enjoy sailing our boats, meeting a different group of folks, and having a great experience with a very welcoming group of fellow sailors.

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Flying Scot racecourse action - photo: Talbot Wilson

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