



With four Caribbean events on the 2007 Gulf Stream Series calendar, there's no reason to miss out on the fun.

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

IRC Racing Caribbean Style

Reggae, rum, and competitive winter racing will add extra spice to US-IRC's 2007 Gulf Stream Series, which this year includes four internationally renowned Caribbean events—the St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, International Rolex Regatta, B.V.I. Spring Regatta, and Stanford Antigua Sailing Week.

“The Gulf Stream Series is a mix of the best inshore and offshore events in the western Atlantic,” says Barry Carroll, US-IRC's executive director. “The Caribbean events supplement these venues by adding one more competitive challenge.”

For teams looking to maintain or improve their skills in a variety of venues, Caribbean events make perfect sense, and an IRC hook promises to attract more teams to

what are already considered standout regattas.

According to Carroll, early indications are that this year's GSS, in its second edition, will include a significant international contingent. “There has been quite a bit of interest, with at least three boats from England expressing interest,” says Carroll. “With luck we should see about 20 qualifiers. Many of the larger designs from Swan, and custom grand-prix boats such as *Titan XII* (Tom Hill's Reichel/Pugh 75), have IRC certificates and race in the Caribbean, so I expect most of those to participate again.”

Inaugural Gulf Stream Series competitors that sailed in the Caribbean last year included Daniel Meyers' Farr 60, *Numbers*,

Bill Alcott's Andrews 68, *Equation*, Danilo Salsi's Swan 45, *DSK Comifin* (above), and Steve DeVoe's Swan 45, *Devocean*.

Come Prepared

As is the case with any trip to the Caribbean, prudent owners intending to compete in any event should come with their paperwork in order. There are currently no IRC measurers in the Caribbean, and facilities for weighing larger boats are limited. Therefore, it's wise to have an IRC rating in hand before beginning the Caribbean circuit.

“The ratings are not assigned on site, which means there must be advance planning by boats intending to race under IRC,” says Carroll. “They can't show up and



Despite light winds in 2006, teams enjoyed great sailing off the coast of Antigua. With the addition of IRC racing to Antigua Sailing Week in April, organizers expect a high-caliber turnout.

get a rating. On the other hand, most of the boats intending to race IRC will have ratings from either Europe or the States. They should arrive already rated. Last year several boats arranged for measurers to come to the Caribbean and measure their boats. Boats that have a valid IMS certificate may use that displacement figure for their IRC weight, subject to the IRC Rule making actual weighing unnecessary.”

One important piece of house-keeping for teams intending to race under IRC is to also obtain a Caribbean Sailing Association rating. The CSA rating rule is the oldest continuously used sailboat handicap in the world and is specific to the conditions of the Caribbean. IRC and CSA ratings are similar from a technical standpoint, i.e. they each produce a single time-on-time correction factor for handicaps, each is a secret rule, meaning there’s no public access to the rating formulas, and each require objective (measured) and subjective (estimated) data.

As far as complying with the CSA rating requirement of all four of the GSS regattas, Carroll adds, “The GSS does not have any direct operational control over individual events, except that they must score the GSS boats under IRC for them to be part of the overall GSS. So, some events may require dual certificates: CSA and IRC. For the boats that are serious about quali-

fying for the GSS, this should not be too great a burden.”

The cost for obtaining a complete measurement and CSA rating is \$4 per foot, plus the cost of a CSA on-line certificate validation (currently \$25), with a minimum fee of \$100, plus the \$25.

Jeffrey Chen, a Trinidad & Tobago-based chief CSA Measurer, says, “All the visiting yachts from England and Europe over the past six years have been more than happy to measure to our CSA Rule, despite in many cases also having a valid IRC rating certificate.”

Part of the reason, Chen adds, is most visiting sailors understand the CSA does much more than manage a rating rule. “The CSA is committed to the development and promotion of youth sailing in the Caribbean,” says Chen. “We also sanction championship regattas throughout the Caribbean.

“I recommend that visiting sailors come to our beautiful islands, race in our great events, and share the camaraderie of like-minded sailors,” says Chen. “Bearing the cost of the additional CSA measurement is a small price to pay for such a wonderful experience.”

Mirian Ebbers, director of the St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, the kick-off of the Caribbean winter racing season, says, “I think it’s always nice to have a series in which boats can compete in, so we’re looking forward to accommodating the Gulf Stream competitors.

To do this, we will score them ‘double’, once on the Caribbean Sailing Association rating and once on the IRC, which is then sent to the States, for compiling of overall GSS results.”

Bill Canfield, coordinator of the St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands’-based International Rolex Regatta, adds, “We are excited that more boats using IRC are coming to the Caribbean. The advent of the GSS entices bigger, more competitive boats from the United States and Europe to sail in our events. Plus, it’s not difficult for us to score boats with ratings either in an individual class, or in addition to the CSA Rule in regards to other championships or series. Either way we are happy to have them.”

The idea behind the GSS is to award trophies upon participation in a minimum of six of the total of 16 IRC events (see Gulf Stream Series race calendar, p. 11). Competitors are required to complete one each of the Medium Distance Races and Long Distances Races, and two each of the Southern Races, and East Coast Around-the-Buoy Races. The Caribbean regattas are grouped in the Southern Races along with the Acura Key West Race Week, Acura Miami Grand Prix, and Charleston Race Week.

St. Maarten Heineken Regatta

Twenty-seven years of “Serious Fun” will be celebrated this year at the St. Maarten Heineken Regatta. This stellar sailing event offers three days of sailing and parties, plus this year an extra fourth day of racing has been added for spinnaker classes. The racing on the opening day will feature windward-leeward courses, and on the remaining three regatta days, competitors will traverse the warm, azure waters surrounding this

dual-nation island of Dutch St. Maarten and French St. Martin, with end-of-day parties in both destinations. More than 250 yachts, just over half of them bare-boats, are expected to enter. "We won't have a specific IRC class," Ebbers says, "but will score these boats additionally for IRC."

Visiting IRC racers will no doubt enjoy the presence of the Volvo Ocean Race-winning *ABN AMRO One* with Mike Sanderson, 2006 ISAF Rolex World Sailor of the Year, skipping this entry with a crew of some of the best sailors in the world.

International Rolex Regatta

The "Crown Jewel of Caribbean Yacht Racing" is expected to at-

tract 100 raceboats from the Caribbean, United States, and Europe to this year's event. Racing, overseen by professional management, is a mix of inter-island and round-the-buoy contests. One highlight of the regatta is the distance race from Cowpet Bay to Charlotte Amalie's Harbor, which showcases St. Thomas' beautiful capital. And, if the new regatta director's plans pan out, there will be one-design classes for Farr 40s, Melges 32s, and Swan 45s at the 34th International Rolex Regatta, hosted by the St. Thomas YC.

and are hoping to host a class championship," says John Sweeney, who co-chairs this year's regatta along with Sandy Symkens. Regatta coordinator, Bill Canfield says the regatta's classes were still early in the development stages, and they were awaiting confirmation of traveling IRC boats to determine class breakouts. "We're happy to have a separate IRC class, and because we give a Rolex watch, six boats would be necessary for a separate class and start."

B.V.I. Spring Regatta and Sailing Festival

The B.V.I. Spring Regatta & Sailing Festival has offered IRC scoring, in addition to CSA scoring, for four years. Regatta director Bob

Phillips explains, "The owners will spend a lot of time analyzing their chances under the different rules, so offering options is attractive to them. Spring Regatta's integrated scoring system, administered by Caribdata, in Cowes, allows us to score the boats using multiple handicapping systems; Caribdata has been involved with IRC scoring since IRC's inception. We expect a significant increase in the number of boats that we will be scoring under both IRC and CSA this year."

Stanford Antigua Sailing Week

pressure, three-day warm up for the regatta, and includes three days of destination cruising and racing. The Nation's Challenge Cup kicks off the three-day B.V.I. Spring Regatta.

The 40th anniversary of Antigua Sailing Week will see many modifications. One of these is a change to the racing categories, particularly Division A, in which Gulf Stream Series racers will compete. Neil Forrester, regatta chairman, says, "We are looking to harmonize the racing categories throughout the Caribbean in the hope of establishing a Caribbean Racing Series for 2008."

For 2007, Division A courses will run as follows: On the first day, racing boats will head off from English Harbour and around the island in an anti-clockwise direction to arrive in Dickenson Bay for the traditional Dickenson Bay Beach Bash. On the second day, boats will continue their circumnavigation back to Falmouth, completing the Round the Island Race. On the third day, the fleet will head out of Willoughby Bay for buoy racing. After a lay day, boats will be back out racing on the south coast with windward-leeward courses off the southwest corner of the island. The race venue then moves to Jolly Harbour on the night of the fourth race day with the Captain's Cocktail Party and the traditional revelry in the local bars. The regatta comes to a close after the traditional Ocean Races off the south coast, one of the week's high points if there's strong trade winds blowing in from the Atlantic. These changes, in addition to the 40th anniversary celebration, are expected to attract more than 200 boats.

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