

← Back

# FAVORABLE TIDES MEAN EARLY START FOR 21- MILE ROW

*August 19, 1998 Publication: Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ) Page: D1 Word Count: 690*

The 23rd North Wildwood Beach Patrol Around The Island Row will start at 6:45 a.m. Thursday at 15th Avenue beach. The early start was necessary to get a favorable tide.

"We figured that with the tide being the way it is, we don't have much choice," race director Charlie Iepson said. "The pre-race meeting will be at 6:15 and we'll try to drop the flag between 6:45 and 7, the earlier the better."

"It's (because of) the time of year, and it's the best date we could find. A lot of the colleges and high schools are starting early this year, and if we waited an extra week, a lot of the top crews would have to go back to school."

The annual row around Wildwood is approximately 21 miles. The Hereford Inlet at the top of the island currently has two sandbars, and they could lengthen the course.

The 38 two-man boats will get a floating start at 15th Avenue and head north to the Hereford Inlet. The fans who follow the boats will gather at various checkpoints to watch the action.

The counter-clockwise race will then proceed to the Stone Harbor Bridge and the Grassy Sound Bridge. In the back bay, the crews will head south to the West Wildwood Train Trestle and the Rio

Grande Bridge.

The next important checkpoint is the Cape May Bridge near the bottom of Wildwood. Once the boats have gone past it, they'll continue to the Cold Spring Inlet, and make the last turn. The final grueling miles are in the ocean up the Wildwood beachfront, and the finish line will be in the water back at 15th Avenue.

After missing all of last year due to a hip replacement operation, Wildwood Crest's 46-year-old Max Bilkins again will team with longtime partner Bick Murphy. The two have won the race five times, and Bilkins also took first in 1978 with John Greenwood, and the following year with Dave Koper.

Craig Whitehead and Mark Wachlin of Avalon triumphed last year in 3 hours, 16 minutes, 7 seconds. Steve Mogek and Jim Wadlow of Cape May won in 1994, and Bilkins and Murphy took the event in 1992, 1993, 1995 and 1996.

Joe Corcoran and Jeff Szeker of Brigantine were third a year ago, 59 seconds behind Avalon. The two Brigantine rowers will be in different boats today.

John Swift of Margate decided the night before the race to team with Eric Funk of Ventnor last year, and they got second in 3:16.57. Swift will go today with brother Joe Swift.

"Bilkins and Murphy are back in the race and you can't count them out," Iepson said. "Wadlow and Mogek are entered, and they might be right in it too. (Dennis) Funk and (George) Miller are always near the top (they were fifth last year), and you don't know where they might finish. Chris McCann and Brian O'Shea of Upper Township were fourth last year, and they could move up."

Funk and Miller, the renowned Ventnor alumni crew, set the meet record of 2:56.06 in the pre-sandbar year of 1987.

Though they don't normally row together, Atlantic City stars Ted Frankel and Mike Alton have paired up. Wildwood's Steve Stocks and Tom Kilian finished sixth last year, while North Wildwood's Kevin Gross and Romolo Forcino were seventh. Matt Guerrieri and John Hazlett of Ventnor finished eighth in 1997.

## LINEUPS

ATLANTIC CITY - Ted Frankel-Mike Alton. BRIGANTINE - Jeff Szeker-J.R. Henry; Joe Corcoran-Matt Corcoran. CAPE MAY - Steve Mogck-Jim Wadlow; Terry Randolph-Marty Franco; Dan Kaufman-Tom Wyatt; Bill Oat-Steve Kwalik. LONGPORT - Roy Mangel-Nick Grasso; Mike McGrath-Brian Fox; Jim Grimley-Tom Grimley. MARGATE - John Swift-Joe Swift; Jim Swift-John Kelley (alumni) Carl Smallwood Jr.-Rich Kugel. NORTH WILDWOOD - Kevin Gross-Romolo Forcino; Joe Taylor-Tom Ogden; Jeff Peterson-Marty Hagan. OCEAN CITY - Bob Amsler-Chris Denn; Kristie Brown-Elise Thieler. SEA ISLE CITY - Tim Quinn-Matt Carroll; Howard Wright-Joe McCann. STONE HARBOR - Darrick Kobierowski-Ryan Ventresca; Tadhg Campbell-Tom Lake. UPPER TOWNSHIP - Bill Handley-Rod Tice; Chris McCann-Brian O'Shea; Tom McCann-Jim Gibbons. VENTNOR - Dennis Funk-George Miller (alumni); Matt Guerrieri-John Hazlett; Scott Jones-Jim Mason (alumni). WILDWOOD - Bill Quinn-Michelle Busza; Steve Stocks-Tom Kilian; Ed Schneider-Tom Reynolds; Steve McGuinn-Joe Marsden. WILDWOOD CREST - Max Bilkins-Bick Murphy; Mike D'Amico-Tom Pietrzak; John Fair-Rick Greco.

---

Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ)

Date: August 19, 1998

Page: D1

Copyright (c) 1998 The Press of Atlantic City

[← Back](#)

# LIFEGUARDS / A.C. DUO WIN AROUND THE ISLAND ROW

*August 21, 1998 Publication: Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ) Page: F1 Word Count: 574*

Mike Alton and Ted Frankel are two well-known Atlantic City Beach Patrol oarsmen, and Thursday they added an unfamiliar trophy to their patrol's gaudy 1998 collection. Though they don't usually row together, Alton and Frankel decided to team up this week and enter the 21-mile North Wildwood Beach Patrol Around The Island Row. No Atlantic City boat had ever won the race in 22 years, and Alton and Frankel had almost no practice, but the two were hoping to place in the top five.

Sure enough, the found themselves in contention with about seven miles to go, and the Atlantic City crew turned it on to win the race.

The makeshift Alton-Frankel boat finished in 2 hours, 59 minutes, 54 seconds.

Frankel rowed bow with partner Greg Egnor this summer to win the South Jersey Lifeguard Championship and the Dutch Hoffmans, but he rowed stern with the 6-foot-6, 212-pound Alton.

"We rowed together three days, starting Monday morning," Frankel said. "It was so unusual to row stern, I never sat there before. But there was no problem. We row similar strokes and it was easy to match up."

"We wanted to be in contention, but we were third after the rock pile (the Cold Spring Inlet at the bottom of Wildwood Island). When I saw we were walking on the field, our momentum started building. Momentum has a lot to do with this race."

The A.C. pair overcame an amazing effort by the Ventnor alumni duo of 46-year-old Dennis Funk and 47-year-old George Miller. Winners in 1987 and usually near the top since then, Funk and Miller led for a while, and crossed the line second in 3:00.20.

"In the ocean (in the final miles) we rowed 20 (strokes) hard, and 20 moderate," Alton said. "We started putting it together and said we could win the race. After about two miles we caught Funk and Miller. The wind was against us but I think that was to our advantage because of our weight (Frankel weighs 190). You could compare it to how a bowling ball goes better against the wind than a tennis ball."

A total of 35 crews got a floating start at 15th Avenue beach before 7 a.m., and the early leaders were Lt. Rich Kugel and alumni Carl Smallwood Jr. of Margate. They finished third in 3:00.37. Kevin Gross and Romolo Forcino of North Wildwood rallied to get fourth.

The Wildwood team of Lt. Steve Stocks and Tom Kilian took over the lead in the bay, but the two faded to 14th. "We tried to be aggressive," Stocks said. "I guess people will think we went out too fast, but it wouldn't have helped to go lighter. We'll be working on putting together the last part of the race."

Funk and Miller got the lead at the Cape May Bridge (with the race about two-thirds over).

"We were first around the rock pile but we've been around long enough to know that it's a long way home," Miller said. "We couldn't have rowed any better. We still row in the bay every morning. I'm old enough to be Ted Frankel's father, it's pretty scary."

Max Bilkins and Bick Murphy, five-time winners of the race, were in the hunt in the bay, and finished fifth.

## Rushes past Ventnor veterans Funk and Miller; N. Wildwood's Forcino and Gross lead locals by placing fourth

By BRIAN CUNNIFF  
Staff Writer

NORTH WILDWOOD -- Ted Frankel had raced in the Around the Island Row three times, never finishing in the top 10.

That all changed in this year's 21-mile counter-clockwise race around the Wildwoods, held Thursday, Aug. 20.

Not only did Frankel crack the top 10, he and Mike Alton of the Atlantic City Beach Patrol were the only crew to finish the race in less than three hours as they won their first-ever Around the Island Row title. Frankel and Alton, rowing together for the first time, overtook Ventnor's venerable veteran crew of 46-year-old Dennis Funk and 47-year-old George Miller about three miles from the finish and pulled away to victory in 2 hours, 59 minutes, 54 seconds.

"This is a first-class event and you look at some of the boats here and you can see it draws a strong field," said Frankel, a 20-year-old Margate resident and Princeton University student. "This is a tough race,

off Wildwood Crest.

Stocks and Killian, who also led the race for a brief time last year, held the lead the longest in the back bay. They passed Kugel and Smallwood just before the Grassy Sound Bridge and held the lead through the West Wildwood train trestle, the George Redding Bridge and the Cape May Toll Bridge.

Funk and Miller, who set the race record of 2:56.06 in their 1987 win, remained in third place ahead of another pack of boats - which included Alton and Frankel - before passing Kugel and Smallwood before the Cape May Toll Bridge to jump into second.

When Funk and Miller eventually passed Killian and Stocks before the turn at the rockpile, Alton and Frankel were in fifth place overall. The Atlantic City crew was among a pack of trailing boats that included Upper Township's Chris McCann and Brian O'Shea, Forcino and Gross, Bilkins and Murphy, Ventnor's Eric Funk and Jim McDevitt and Cape May's Steve Mogck and Jim Wadlow.

"It's three hours long and you're racing against the best rowers in South Jersey, guys who are in the best shape of anyone around. I couldn't be happier to win it. It's a great feeling knowing you can compete with these guys."

Funk and Miller, who jumped ahead of Wildwood's Tom Killian and Steve Stocks between the Cape May Toll Bridge and the Cold Spring Inlet rockpile and held the lead for about 30 minutes, finished second in 3:00.20.

Margate's Rich Kugel and Carl Smallwood never really challenged for the top spot after the race was an hour old but made their presence felt the entire way by staying on the heels of the leader throughout. They placed third in 3:00.37.

The top three finishers were followed by two boats that made strong moves against tough ocean currents to crack the top five. North Wildwood's Romolo Forcino and Kevin Gross were fourth in 3:02.00, followed by Wildwood Crest's Max Bilkins and Bick Murphy, who had won the race four of the last five times they competed (they did not enter last year's race), in 3:02.29. Both of those boats separated themselves from a pack of about six boats by the time the rowers reached the ocean waters

Once the rowers hit the rockpile however, Alton and Frankel took off as if they had an engine in their boat. Behind Funk and Miller by about 35 seconds, Alton and Frankel moved up to fourth place at the turn before quickly overtaking the Margate boat for third place. They then passed Killian and Stocks, who wound up fading to ninth place overall, and set their sights on Funk and Miller.

"Our strategy when we hit the ocean was to be in contention," Frankel said. "We figured if we were in the top five we'd be in a good position to overtake the leaders."

By the time Funk and Miller reached the Wildwood Crest fishing pier, Alton and Frankel were only 11 seconds behind. Shortly thereafter, they passed the Ventnor crew to take first place. Funk and Miller tried valiantly to fight back, matching Alton and Frankel stroke for stroke for about five minutes. But in the end, Alton and Frankel were simply too strong and passed Funk and Miller for good about two miles from the finish at 15th Street in North Wildwood.

"We tried to save pretty much our whole tank for the ocean and press it all out there," said Frankel. "We're two bigger guys and we wanted to lay back into the headwind

## Strong finish vaults A.C. crew to 1st place in island row



Michael J. Walsh

Ventnor alums Dennis Funk and George Miller took a brief lead just after the Cape May Toll Bridge. They finished in second place.

out front and things worked out for us. It feels great to win something like this."

McCann and O'Shea placed sixth, Mogck and Wadlow finished seventh, Margate alumni Jim Swift and John Kelley wound up eighth, Ventnor's Eric Funk and Jim McDevitt were ninth and Wildwood's Steve McGuinn and Joe Marsden used a strong surge to finish 10th.

Stocks and Killian eventually placed 14th.

**ROWING AROUND THE ISLAND:** Alton, who also won this year's Dutch Hoffman Memorials and cliched Atlantic City's win at the South Jersey Championships by placing second in the singles row, did not attend the post-race banquet and awards ceremony at the North Wildwood Fire Hall. Alton, 29, had to leave for Kansas to attend the wedding of his brother-in-law. ... Frankel, whose normal rowing partner is Greg Egnor, also won the doubles row at the South Jersey Championships and the Dutch Hoffman Memorials this summer. ... Six of the top 10 boats featured at least one competitor over the age of 30. ... Last year's champions, Avalon's Mark Wachlin and Craig Whitehead, did not enter this year's race due to an illness to

Whitehead. ... North Wildwood's Joe Taylor, a year-round lifeguard in Hollywood Beach, Fla., flew in just for the race. He arrived in North Wildwood about 8 1/2 hours before the start of the race. He and partner Tom Ogden finished in 17th place. ... Three females entered in this year's race. Wildwood's Michelle Busza and partner Bill Quinn placed 27th in 3:20.46. Ocean City's Kristie Brown and Elise Theiler, the only all-female crew, were 35th with a time of 4:02.31.

## RESULTS

1. Mike Alton and Ted Frankel (AC), 2:59.54; 2. Dennis Funk and George Miller (V alumni), 3:00.24; 3. Rich Kugel and Carl Smallwood (M), 3:00.37; 4. Romolo Forcino and Kevin Gross (NW), 3:02.00; 5. Max Bilkins and Bick Murphy (WC), 3:02.29; 6. Chris McCann and Brian O'Shea (UT alumni), 3:03.35; 7. Steve Mogck and Jim Wadlow (CM), 3:04.06; 8. John Kelley and Jim Swift (M alumni), 3:04.52; 9. Eric Funk and Jim McDevitt (V), 3:05.42; 10. Joe Marsden and Steve McGuinn (W), 3:05.22; 11. Matt Guerrieri and John Hazlett (V), 3:07.53; 12. Joe Corcoran and Matt Corcoran (B), 3:08.07; 13. Bob Amsler and Chris

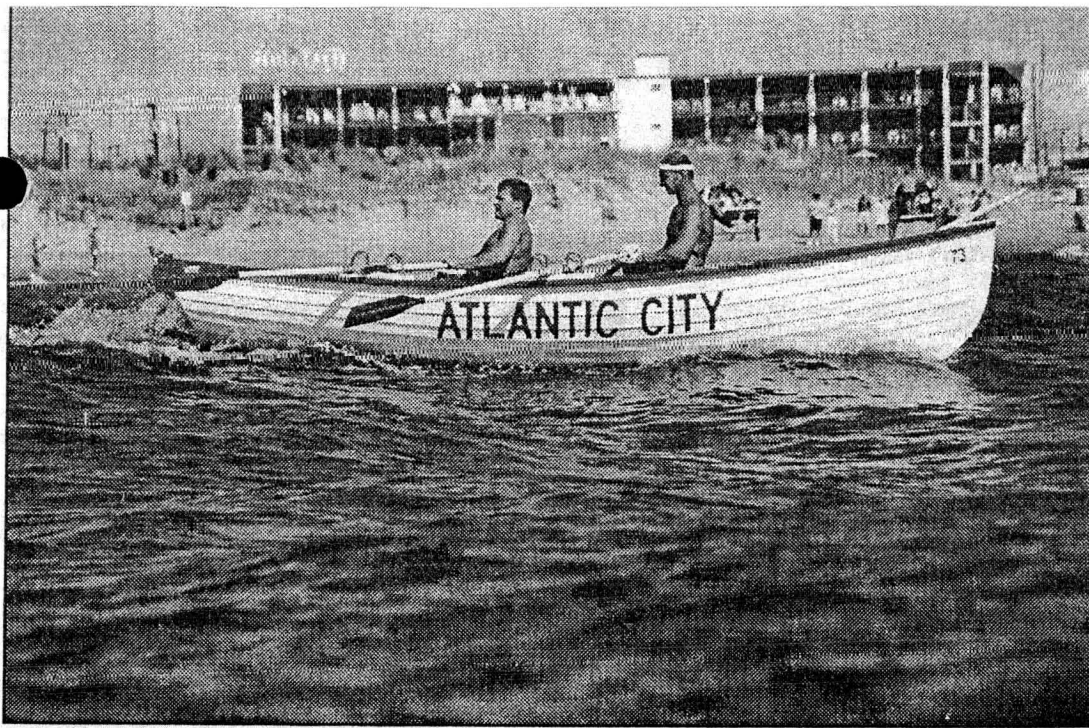
Denn (OC), 3:09.14; 14. Tom Killian and Steve Stocks (W), 3:09.55; 15. John Fair and Rick Greco (WC), 3:10.02; 16. Jim Mason and Scott Jones (V alumni), 3:10.12; 17. Mike D'Amico and Tom Pietrzak (WC), 3:10.57; 18. Tom Ogden and Joe Taylor (NW), 3:12.29; 19. Nick Grasso and Roy Mangel (L), 3:13.31; 20. Rom Reynolds and Ed Schneider (W), 3:14.04.

21. Louis Niglio and Mike Skey (V), 3:14.34; 22. Brian Fox and Mike McGrath (L), 3:15.26; 23. Joe Swift and John Swift (M), 3:15.27; 24. J.R. Henry and Jeff Szeke (B), 3:16.19; 25. Tadgh Campbell and Tom Lake (SH), 3:18.52; 26. Marty Hagan and Jeff Peterson (NW), 3:20.02; 27. Michelle Busza and Bill Quinn (W), 3:20.46; 28. Darrick Kobierowski and Ryan Ventresa (SH), 3:25.40; 29. Joe McCann and Howard Wright (SIC alumni), 3:26.44; 30. Bill Oat and Steve Kwalik (CM), 3:27.47; 31. George Berkelbach and Greg Morace (A), 3:30.55; 32. Jim Gibbons and Tom McCann (UT alumni), 3:34.23; 33. Dan Kaufman and Tom Wyatt (CM), 3:41.03; 34. Tim Karabin and Tim Malone (A), 3:43.23; 35. Kristie Brown and Elise Theiler (OC), 4:02.31.



Michael J. Walsh

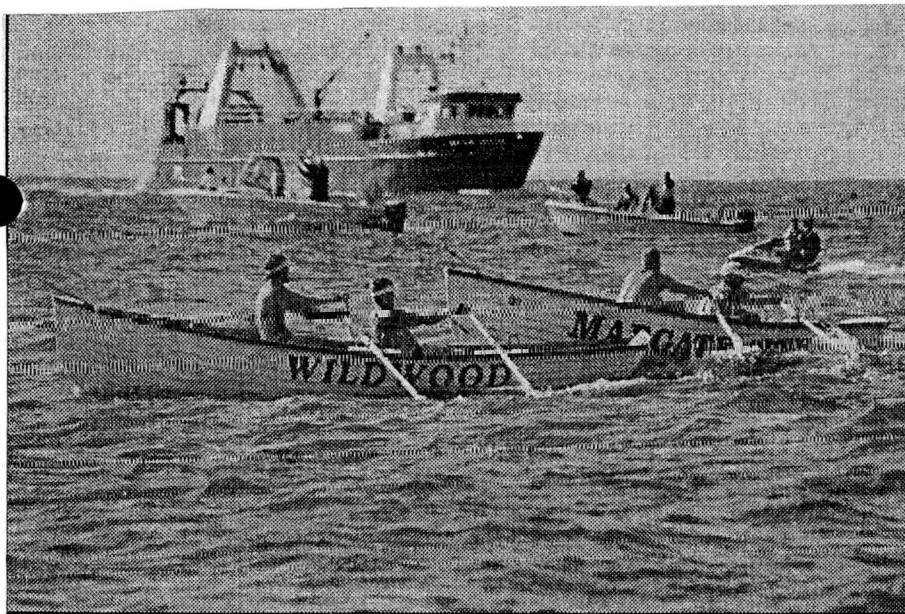
North Wildwood's Romolo Forcino and Kevin Gross passed a few boats after the turn at the rockpile and eventually placed fourth. They were the top finishers from Cape May County.



Michael J. Walsh

Atlantic City's Mike Alton and Ted Frankel won their first-ever Around the Island Row with a comeback finish. They remained among the top 10 for much of the race before making a move after the turn at the rockpile at Cold Spring Inlet. They eventually moved into first place about 30 minutes from the finish.

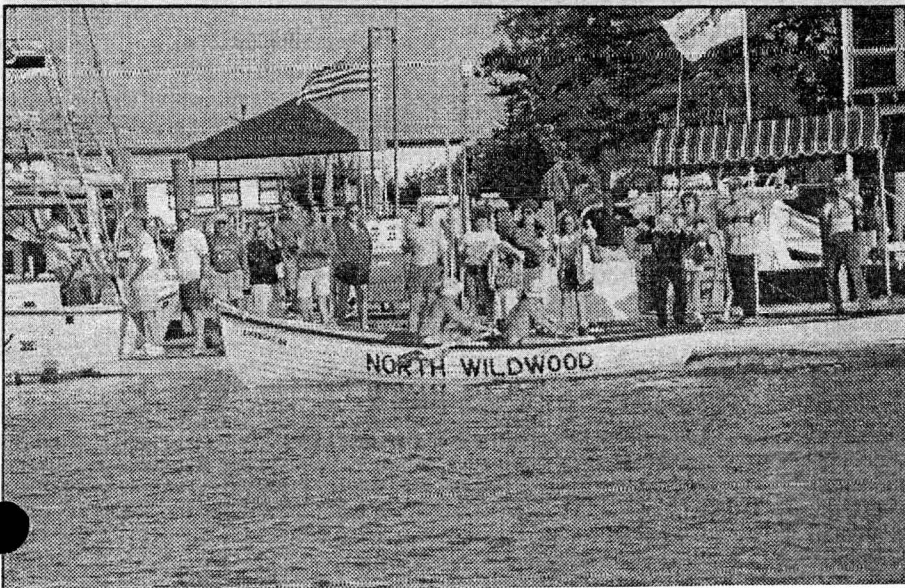




Wildwood's Tom Killian & Steve Stocks and Margate's Rich Kugel and Carl Smallwood turn rockpile in front of huge tuna boat returning from offshore.



Cape May's Steve Mogck & Jim Wadlow, 1994 champions who finished 7th this year, make their way through the back bay.



NWBP's Tom Ogden & Joe Taylor are cheered on by crowd in back bay off of Shawcrest.

Upper Twp's Chris McCann & Brian O'Shea row their way to 6th place.



WBP's Joe Marsden & Steve McGuinn stay inside of 5 time champions Max Bilkins & Bick Murphy of the WCBP.

**LIFEGUARDS / A.C. DUO WIN AROUND THE ISLAND ROW**

Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ) - Friday, August 21, 1998

Author: GUY GARGAN For The Press

Mike Alton and Ted Frankel are two well-known Atlantic City Beach Patrol oarsmen, and Thursday they added an unfamiliar trophy to their patrol's gaudy 1998 collection.

Though they don't usually row together, Alton and Frankel decided to team up this week and enter the 21-mile North Wildwood Beach Patrol Around The Island Row. No Atlantic City boat had ever won the race in 22 years, and Alton and Frankel had almost no practice, but the two were hoping to place in the top five.

Sure enough, the found themselves in contention with about seven miles to go, and the Atlantic City crew turned it on to win the race.

The makeshift Alton-Frankel boat finished in 2 hours, 59 minutes, 54 seconds.

Frankel rowed bow with partner Greg Egnor this summer to win the South Jersey Lifeguard Championship and the Dutch Hoffmans, but he rowed stern with the 6-foot-6, 212-pound Alton.

"We rowed together three days, starting Monday morning," Frankel said. "It was so unusual to row stern, I never sat there before. But there was no problem. We row similar strokes and it was easy to match up."

"We wanted to be in contention, but we were third after the rock pile (the Cold Spring Inlet at the bottom of Wildwood Island). When I saw we were walking on the field, our momentum started building. Momentum has a lot to do with this race."

The A.C. pair overcame an amazing effort by the Ventnor alumni duo of 46-year-old Dennis Funk and 47-year-old George Miller. Winners in 1987 and usually near the top since then, Funk and Miller led for a while, and crossed the line second in 3:00.20.

"In the ocean (in the final miles) we rowed 20 (strokes) hard, and 20 moderate," Alton said. "We started putting it together and said we could win the race. After about two miles we caught Funk and Miller. The wind was against us but I think that was to our advantage because of our weight (Frankel weighs 190). You could compare it to how a bowling ball goes better against the wind than a tennis ball."

A total of 35 crews got a floating start at 15th Avenue beach before 7 a.m., and the early leaders were Lt. Rich Kugel and alumni Carl Smallwood Jr. of Margate. They finished third in 3:00.37. Kevin Gross and Romolo Forcino of North Wildwood rallied to get fourth.

The Wildwood team of Lt. Steve Stocks and Tom Kilian took over the lead in the bay, but the two faded to 14th. "We tried to be aggressive," Stocks said. "I

guess people will think we went out too fast, but it wouldn't have helped to go lighter. We'll be working on putting together the last part of the race."

Funk and Miller got the lead at the Cape May Bridge (with the race about two-thirds over).

"We were first around the rock pile but we've been around long enough to know that it's a long way home," Miller said. "We couldn't have rowed any better. We still row in the bay every morning. I'm old enough to be Ted Frankel's father, it's pretty scary."

Max Bilkins and Bick Murphy, five-time winners of the race, were in the hunt in the bay, and finished fifth.

**Caption:** (1) Mike Alton and Ted Frankel of the Atlantic City Beach Patrol cross the finish to win the North Wildwood Beach Patrol Around The Island Row. (2) ALTON (3) FRANKEL Press color photo(s) by Chris Polk

**Edition:** All

**Section:** Sports

**Page:** F1

**Dateline:** NORTH WILDWOOD

**Record Number:** 9808210036

*Copyright (c) 1998 The Press of Atlantic City*