

LIFEGUARDS / AROUND THE ISLAND ROW CALLS FOR EARLY START TIME MONDAY

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Lifeguard events seem to get more popular each summer at the Jersey Shore, but one of the top races always gets closely viewed by only a few faithful. It's the North Wildwood Beach Patrol Around The Island Row, which will begin 6:45 a.m. Monday at 15th Avenue beach in North Wildwood.

The reason for Monday's early start time in the 25th annual Around The Island Row is to get a favorable tide. The counter-clockwise, 21-mile rowing marathon has a field of 26 boats, which will get a floating start in the ocean at 15th Avenue beach and proceed northward to the Hereford Inlet at the top of Wildwood. The crews go under the Stone Harbor Bridge, and then the Grassy Sound Bridge before entering the back bay.

The boats then head south, going under the Rio Grande Bridge and then the Cape May Bridge before entering the Cold Spring Inlet at the bottom of Wildwood. The crews continue and make the final turn into the ocean. They then row north in the ocean past Wildwood Crest and Wildwood and finish back at 15th Avenue beach.

"You have (Dennis) Funk and (George) Miller, and they set a new record time last year," race director Charlie Iepson said. "They come down here and look around more than anyone. They look at the (Hereford) Inlet and also the area around the Grassy Sound Bridge."

Last August, Funk and Miller, then 47 and 48 years old, respectively, turned in an amazing performance by setting the meet record with a time of 2 hours, 55 minutes, 30 seconds. A sandbar appeared in the Hereford Inlet in the early 1990s, making the race about a mile longer, but last year it was gone. The two Ventnor Beach Patrol alumni row every day, and should certainly contend Monday.

There are several other boats that could win it. Cape May's Kevin Murphy and Jim Wadlow won the Upper Township Six-Mile Bay Row in late July, and then the Margate Memorials the following week. Wadlow teamed with Steve Mogck to win the island row in 1994.

Craig Whitehead and John Glomb of Avalon should be tough. Whitehead won the race with Mark Wachlin in 1997, and Glomb won his second career South Jersey Lifeguard singles row championship in Ventnor last Friday.

The kings of the race are still Max Bilkins and Bick Murphy of Wildwood Crest, winners in 1985, 1992-93 and 1995-96. Bilkins, 48, and Murphy, 41, were the Crest's crew in every South Jersey doubles event this year, getting second in the Cape May County Championships and Beschen-Callahan Memorials and third at the David Kerr Memorials.

"You can never count out Bilkins and Murphy," Iepson said.

"The Wildwood crews of Steve McGuinn and Mike Regan (seventh in 1999), and Steve Stocks and Tom Kilian (ninth), could surprise. Rich Kugel and Carl

Smallwood Jr. of Margate got fourth last year (and also won the 1999 Six-Mile Bay Row), and B.J. Fox and Mike McGrath from Longport got fifth. Romolo Forcino and Kevin Gross from our patrol got second last year (in 2:57:20), but this year they haven't rowed together."

Others who could contend are brothers Dan and Matt Garbutt of Ocean City, and the Margate alumni team of Jim Swift and John Kelley.

LINEUPS

ATLANTIC CITY - Nick Bennett-John Ammerman; AVALON - Matt Hogan-Greg Morace (alumni), Craig Whitehead-John Glomb, Tim Karabin-Dan Karabin; BRIGANTINE - Matt Corcoran-Joe Corcoran; CAPE MAY - Kevin Murphy-Jim Wadlow; LONGPORT - Mike McGrath-B.J. Fox; MARGATE - Rich Kugel-Carl Smallwood Jr., Jim Swift-John Kelley (alumni); NORTH WILDWOOD - Tom Ogden-Pat Murray, Kevin Gross-Romolo Forcino; OCEAN CITY - Dan Garbutt-Matt Garbutt; STONE HARBOR - Chris Kullack-Scott Ashman, Tom Lake-Rob Lythgoe, Darrick Kobierowski-Mike Farrell; VENTNOR - Jim McDewitt-Wilmer Abbott, Paul Money-Dave Roncinske, Dennis Funk-George Miller (alumni), Nick Tripician-Luke Duff, Jim Mason-Brian O'Shea (alumni); WILDWOOD - Steve McGuinn-Mike Regan, Steve Stocks-Tom Kilian, Ed Schneider-Allan O'Connor; WILDWOOD CREST - Max Bilkins-Bick Murphy, John Fair-Terry McGovern, Jack Moore-Eric Caballero.

CHAMPIONS

1999 - Dennis Funk-George Miller, Ventnor alumni, 2:55:30

1998 - Ted Frankel-Mike Alton, Atlantic City, 2:59:54

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 - Dan O'Malley-Dave Kerr, Avalon
- 1979 - Max Bilkins-Dave Koper, Wildwood Crest
- 1978 - Max Bilkins-John Greenwood, Wildwood Crest
- 1977 - Jim Troy-Harry Zander, North Wildwood
- 1976 - Jim Troy-Harry Zander, North Wildwood, 2:59:17.

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AROUND THE ISLAND ROW / AFTER 21 MILES, A SURPRISE

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Stone Harbor lifeguards Rob Lythgoe and Tom Lake surprised a lot of people Tuesday at the 25th annual North Wildwood Beach Patrol Around The Island Row. Especially themselves.

The 21-year-old Lythgoe and the 22-year-old Lake came from well off the pace to upset a host of more seasoned crews in the 21-mile counterclockwise row around Wildwood island. In the final mile, the Stone Harbor team pulled away to a more-than-10-boatlength victory in 2 hours, 59 minutes, 58 seconds.

It was the first time that a Stone Harbor Beach Patrol boat had ever won the race.

"I wasn't expecting this at all, especially since this is my first time in this race," Lythgoe, the bow man, said. "We were really surprised to start gaining (on the other boats). I was definitely nervous (before the race), since I had never rowed it before. We knew there was no pressure going into it, we just wanted to do as well as we could.

"After we turned the rocks (made the final turn into the ocean after the rock-laden Cold Spring Inlet, known to the rowers as 'the rockpile') we were seventh, and we started moving up. I said to go get the leaders, and with about five miles go we caught them."

Margate Chief Rich Kugel and partner Carl Smallwood Jr. battled for second place throughout the last mile with Wildwood's Steve Stocks and Tom Kilian. The two boats were ruled dead-even for second place at the finish line in the ocean at 15th Avenue beach, the first tie in the history of the event. Their time was 3:00:38.

Six boatlengths behind was the Ventnor alumni team of Dennis Funk and George Miller in fourth place, and the Cape May crew of Kevin Murphy and Jim Wadlow finished fifth, two lengths behind Funk and Miller.

It was the one of the most exciting and competitive Around The Island Rows in the history of the event, and the lead exchanged hands several times. Max Bilkins and Bick Murphy of Wildwood Crest, five-time winners of the race, actually led twice, and appeared to take command after the rockpile until the charge by Lythgoe and Lake. The Crest veterans eventually were sixth.

Another team that led twice was the makeshift crew of Longport's Nick Grasso and Brigantine's Joe Corcoran. Rowing in a Brigantine boat, Grasso and Corcoran first led at the rough Hereford Inlet at the top of Wildwood, lost the lead to Bilkins and Murphy but regained it just before the West Wildwood train trestle. Grasso and Corcoran finally yielded first place to Funk and Miller before the Cape May Bridge, and faded to seventh place.

Corcoran, rowing stern, became the race's only minor casualty. He was groggy from dehydration after the race and was taken to Burdette Tomlin Hospital. Corcoran was treated and released.

"He started to cramp up after the jetty (the Cold Spring Inlet)," Grasso said. "It was literally our first time in the boat together. We decided to team up at the women's race (the Cape Atlantic Women's Lifeguard Invitational on Aug. 9). I thought we had a chance to win until he started to have problems."

RESULTS

1. Stone Harbor (Rob Lythgoe-Tom Lake) 2:59:58;
2. (tie) Margate (Carl Smallwood Jr.-Rich Kugel), and Wildwood (Steve Stocks-Tom Kilian) 3:00:38;
4. Ventnor alumni (Dennis Funk-George Miller) 3:01:19;
5. Cape May (Kevin Murphy-Jim Wadlow) 3:01:27;
6. Wildwood Crest (Max Bilkins-Bick Murphy) 3:02:15;
7. Longport/Brigantine (Nick Grasso-Joe Corcoran) 3:02:20;
8. Avalon (John Glomb-Craig Whitehead) 3:02:22;
9. Atlantic City (John Ammerman-Nick

Bennett) 3:03:12; 10. Wildwood (Steve McGuinn-Mike Regan) 3:03:38; 11. Ventnor/Avalon alumni (Jim Mason-Brian O'Shea) 3:03:42; 12. North Wildwood (Kevin Gross-Romolo Forcino) 3:04:16; 13. North Wildwood (Pat Murray-Tom Ogden) 3:04:54; 14. Longport (Mike McGrath-B.J. Fox) 3:05:58; 15. Wildwood Crest (John Fair-Terry McGovern) 3:06:47; 16. Margate alumni (John Kelley-Jim Swift) 3:07:10; 17. Ventnor (Nick Tripician-Luke Duff) 3:08:23; 18. Ocean City (Matt Garbutt-Dan Garbutt) 3:09:42; 19. Stone Harbor (Darrick Kobierowski-Mike Farrell) 3:12:03; 20. Ventnor (Paul Money-Dave Roncinske) 3:16:32; 21. Wildwood (Ed Schneider-Allan O'Connor) 3:16:58; 22. Ventnor (Jim McDevitt-Wilmer Abbott) 3:17:40; 23. Avalon (Matt Hogan-John Wachter) 3:20:08; 24. Wildwood Crest (Jack Moore-Eric Caballero) 3:21:27; 25. Avalon (Tim Karabin-Dan Karabin) 3:24:45; 26. Stone Harbor (Chris Kullack-Scot Ashman) 3:43:09.

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