

[← Back](#)

2018

Wildwood lifeguard, alumnus retake title - Kobierowski and McGovern regain Island Row title

By GUY GARGAN Staff Writer August 23, 2018 Publication: Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ)
Page: 1B Word Count: 1044

NORTH WILDWOOD - Until next year at least, Darrick Kobierowski and Terry McGovern are the modern kings of the Bud Tarbotton North Wildwood Beach Patrol Around the Island Row.

Kobierowski and McGovern, both 44, rowed to victory Wednesday morning in the 43rd annual, 20-mile doubles race around Wildwood, finishing in 2 hours, 46 minutes, 15 seconds. The two have won the event four of the past five years.

Kobierowski is a lifeguard alumnus from Stone Harbor and Wildwood, and McGovern is a Wildwood lifeguard who was injured this year and didn't guard.

The Cape May crew of John Knies and Rob Moran led for the first two-thirds of the race and finished about 150 yards behind in second place in 2:47.47. The alumni crew of Carl Smallwood Jr. (Margate) and B.J. Fox (Longport), winners of the race in 2008 and 2009, placed third in 2:48:36, about 50 yards behind Cape May. Fourth in 2:50:19 were defending champions Steve McGuinn and Brandon Joyce of Wildwood, about 120 yards behind Smallwood and Fox.

"It feels great to win it again," McGovern said. "After 2017, we prepared and stayed focused and worked together as a team, and it showed today."

McGovern had knee surgery this past winter and didn't feel his was able to be a lifeguard this summer. But he said he has made a complete recovery.

"It was a really challenging row," McGovern said. "It always is, but we rowed against a stiff headwind the entire time in the bay. Then when we turned the rocks into the ocean, the wind pushed us out to sea and it was difficult to steer."

Kobierowski and McGovern became the only crew to win the Island Row three straight times in 2014-16. They finished fourth last year after a bad start.

The race, a mile less than a complete circuit of Wildwood, began at First and Surf avenues and went counterclockwise through the inlets, intracoastal waterway and ocean, ending at the 15th Avenue beach.

"I didn't know we had it till we crossed the finish line," said Kobierowski, who is a Wildwood fireman. "We rowed farther out in the ocean to avoid the swells and then came back toward the finish line (about 80 yards off the beach). It felt good to put in a long, hard year of training and the end result is the one you want."

Kobierowski and McGovern, rowing an unmarked boat, caught up to the Cape May crew in the Cold Spring Inlet at the bottom of Wildwood (known as the rock pile), and took the lead as the 7-mile ocean leg began.

Knies, 21, was rowing around the island for the first time. Moran, 30, the winner of the Cape May Beach Patrol Superathlon in 2016 and this summer, rowed around Wildwood last year with partner Billy Rose and finished seventh.

"It was definitely harder than the Superathlon because it was longer," Moran said. "We took off pretty much from the start and we definitely did our best. I'll do it again."

Knies is a rising junior rower for George Washington University, and isn't sure if he'll return to guard next year.

"We rowed around Cape May once to get ready," Knies said. "It was a good time. I enjoyed it. When we were leading I was thinking about having our picture up on the wall (at Cape May headquarters)."

Notes: Smallwood and Fox have been third in the race two years in a row. The only female in the race was Riley McDade, a 16-year Wildwood lifeguard who finished 15th with Wildwood Crest's Ron Ayers. Ventnor alumnus George Miller, 67, rowed the race for the 35th straight year, this time with partner Rob Johnson, 33, a former collegiate rower and coach. They were ninth in 3:02:28. Miller won the race four times with Dennis Funk.

Results

1. Wildwood alumnus-Wildwood (Darrick Kobierowski-Terry McGovern) 2:46:15; 2. Cape May (John Knies-Rob Moran) 2:47:47; 3. Margate alumnus-Longport alumnus (Carl Smallwood Jr.-B.J. Fox) 2:48:36; 4. Wildwood (Steve McGuinn-Brandon Joyce) 2:50:19; 5. Ocean City-Ventnor (Sean McCann-Brett Hanson) 2:53:01; 6. Ocean City (Ray Conover-Andrew Duff) 2:56:12; 7. Upper Township-Wildwood alumnus (Wayne MacMurray-Bill Kindle) 2:56:18; 8. Wildwood (John Preston-Tom Kilian) 2:58:52; 9. Ventnor alumni (George Miller-Rob Johnson) 3:02:28; 10. Margate alumnus-Ventnor alumnus (Jim Swift-Tom Sher) 3:04:05; 11. North Wildwood (Pete Lees-Shaun Stamm) 3:04:52; 12. Sea Isle City alumnus-Upper Township alumnus (Kevin Larkin-Jim Gibbons) 3:05:35; 13. Upper Township (Joe O'Neil-Andrew Tobiasen) 3:09:08; 14. Wildwood (Nate Dirvin-Ryan Comas) 3:15:50; 15. Wildwood Crest-Wildwood (Ron Ayers-Riley McDade) 3:27:00; 16. Wildwood (Ed Schneider-Ben Melle) 3:36:12.

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