

Water Fronts for Dec. 17

In a see-saw battle that went down to the final race of the season, Tim Haapanen's Catalina 27, Sisu, won the 2009 Ventura County High Points championship.

Haapanen and others in the top five will be presented take-home trophies on Feb. 13 at Pierpont Bay Yacht Club at the skippers meeting of the first race of the Spring Series.

Other trophy winners include Paul Moore and Deke Klatt for second place in Angry Hillbillies, a Zap 26; Bill Miller for third place in Superstition, a Capri 25; John Thawley and Gene Beville for fourth place in XS, a Mull 30, and Rod Abbott for fifth place in Funatic, a Choate 48.

Trophies will be presented by new series sponsors, Richard and Paula Share, co-owners of Intelligent Weighing Technology, Inc. They are co-owners of the Olson 30, Perfect Balance, the 2008 winner of the High Points championship.

Intelligent Weighing Technology, Inc. serves the North American market with a complete range of force measurement and load monitoring technology, industrial and laboratory scales and balances, from 0.01 milligram to 275 tons. Of special note is the Mini Weigher plus that is ideal for weighing boats up to 5 tons.

"I bought Sisu mainly to go cruising and fishing, but knew that someday I would race her," Haapanen said. He never dreamed his season would be so successful.

"I always felt that with Sisu, I could become a winner," Haapanen said. "This year, I was determined to put it all together and give it my best shot. I went to Gary (Swenson) and Deke (Klatt) at Ullman sails and asked for a 'go fast' headsail that could help me compete with Velero. They did a great job!"

Sisu, loosely translated in Finnish as "special strength and stubborn determination" dominated the area's non-spinnaker fleet and became the first ever non-spinnaker boat to win the county championship.

Sisu placed first in class in the final race of the year, while Angry Hillbillies came in fifth and that was margin of difference after a full season of racing.

Sailing has been a family tradition for Haapanen. His grandfather sold his farm in Finland in 1950 and bought an 82-foot schooner with the intention of sailing to America. The boat didn't make it but the Haapanen family did and Tim's father gained citizenship at age 19.

Haapanen began racing at age 8 and as a young adult sailed a Mercury to a first place finish in the 1978 summer series over local sailing legend Leo Robbins and others.

Haapanen owned Sisu for 15 years before finally opting to seriously race her. His regular crew has been Brian Cunningham, Dave Newton and Diane Van Arsdall who took the helm for all the female skipper races. Also crewing on occasion was Kim Weir.

The highlight of Haapanen's racing season was bitter-sweet. He sailed Sisu to first in class in the Santa Barbara Channel Challenge and helped Channel Islands Yacht Club take second place in the Ventura Cup team competition. His son died the morning of the second day of racing.

Haapanen dedicated that race to his son. "It was a difficult race on many levels, but we managed to win," Haapanen said. His family convinced him to go ahead and race, but Haapanen had to miss the post-race festivities.

"I would like to note that the whole Ventura Cup weekend, as usual, was a favorite event," Haapanen said. "They (Ventura Yacht Club) put on a great show and it was a treat to participate." The county's top spinnaker boat, Angry Hillbillies, is owned by Paul Moore who has owned so many boats "I've lost count."

Moore has been sailing only seven years, but he knows how to be a winner. Get a good boat and crew and he's done a yeoman's job at that. Klatt, one of Southern California's top sailors, drives the boat while Moore handles the pit work. Regular crew members are Jay Cook, Sam Martin and Lisa Renshaw. Jackie Lilly drove the boat in lady skipper races. "I feel lucky I had such a dedicated crew," Moore said.

Like Haapanen, Moore's proudest achievement in 2009 was winning his class in the S.B. Channel Challenge in which he led his team to victory in the Ventura Cup.

Sisu scored 145 points to win the championship, while Angry Hillbillies had 141. The irony for Moore and Klatt is that, although finishing second, they scored more points than any county champion since 1994.

The 2009 Top Ten

1--Sisu, Catalina 27, Tim Haapanen, 145; 2--Angry Hillbillies, Zap 26, Paul Moore & Deke Klatt 141; 3--Superstition, Capri 25, Bill Miller, 116; 4--XS, Mull 30, John Thawley, 107; 5--Funatic, Rod Choate 48, Rod Abbott, 100; 6--Perfect Balance, Olson 30, Richard Sharpe, 90; 7--Velero, Islander 29, Brent Swanson, 85; 8--Rival, J-35, Dick Velthoen, Dave Boatner & Paul DeFreitas, 68; 9--Out Patient, Cal 29, Randy Alcorn, 67; 10--Zuma Jay, Cal 25, Kevin Dickmann, 66. Other top boats: Quiet Times 54; Pangea 52; R Escape 50; Tortoise 49; Tortoise 49, Scooter 46, Rambunctious 40, Jaded 37, The Source 34, Misirlou 32, Maine Squeeze 32, West Wing 32.

Past Champions

2008—Perfect Balance; 2007—Bikini Machine; 2006—Deception; 2005—Funatic; 2004—XS; 2003—Rambunctious; 2002—Prime Time; 2001—Lina; 2000—XS; 1999—Abracadabra; 1998—Majic; 1997—XS; 1996—Relentless; 1995—Relentless; 1994—Tacos Pescados; 1993—Stampede; 1992—Leading Lady; 1991—Relentless; 1990—Color Blind.

All-Time Active Top Ten

1—XS; 2—Funatic; 3—Tortoise; 4—Perfect Balance; 5—Rival; 6—Velero; 7—Wind Dancer; 8—Rambunctious; 9—Jaded; 10—Pangea.

SOLID BOX:

Upcoming sailboat races:

* Sunday, Jan. 17, VYC Regatta Series 1. Hosted by Ventura Yacht Club, this is the first of three regattas for PHRF boats and J-24s. The other regattas will be sailed on April 18 and Sept. 12. The entry fee for the series is \$45. Entry for individual regattas is \$20. Three races are planned for each regatta, with skippers meetings at 8:30 and racing beginning at 11. Notice of race and entry form are available on the club's website at Venturayachtclub.org. For more information, contact Stan Whisenhunt at 659-1464 or e-mail him at Swhisenhun@aol.com.

SOLID BOX:

2010 ocean sailboat racing schedule:

Jan. 17, VYC PHRF & J-24 Regatta Series 1.

Feb. 13, PBYC, Spring Series 1

Feb. 20-21, CIYC, SCYA Midwinters, PHRF & J-24.

(Fax your race announcements, results and other information to Stan Whisenhunt at 659-3058 or call him at 659-1464. His e-mail address is Swhisenhun@aol.com).