

The Officers, Directors and Members of
US SAILING
are pleased to present the
ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL
to the rescuing crew of

ELAN

for the rescue as follows:

On March 16, 2002, Elan, an Express 37, on the way in, under mainsail only, following the second race of St. Francis Yacht Club's Spring One Design Regatta, they discovered a broken bolt on the port lower shroud and quickly decided to jibe to relieve the pressure. One of the trimmers, Richard Beauregard, stepped in to help handle the mainsheet, as the boat gybed, the boom struck Beauregard in the head knocking him to the deck and slid under the lifelines before anyone could get to him. Beauregard was face down in the water, unconscious, then the flotation of his PFD rolled him over onto his back.

Fellow PFD wearing crew Scott Sorensen, a paramedic, and John Kernot, jumped overboard immediately to help Beauregard. Beauregard was bleeding from a cut on his forehead. After 5 minutes Beauregard began to come around and became combative struggling to sit up, and began to lose more blood from the arterial wound in his forehead. Scott immediately began to apply compression to stem the blood loss.

While Elan was getting the mainsail down, Rick Wallace, a boardsailor on beach at Crissy Field, observed this event. He launched his board and was on the scene rapidly where Wallace, Kernot, and Sorensen used the board to support Beauregard.

The St. Francis Yacht Club finish line boat Punnett arrived quickly, radioed shore to call emergency services and with some difficulty, was able to fish the three crew of Elan out of the water. The three crew had spent 15-20 minutes in the water. The Punnett then zipped back to the St. Francis docks where an ambulance was waiting. Beauregard was loaded onto a backboard and sped off to San Francisco General's ER. Beauregard was treated with 20 stitches, his hypothermic body temperature was 86°F, which rose to 96.8°F an hour later, and then he was released.

Congratulations to the Rescuing Crew of Elan, including Scott Sorensen and John Kernot, for risking their own lives in severely hypothermic conditions, and working without contact barriers, such as latex gloves. US SAILING is pleased to present the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal in recognition of this event.

Ronald C. Trossbach
Chairman, Safety at Sea Committee
By Direction

The Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal was presented to Scott Sorensen, John Kernot, Dennis George, Rick Wallace, and Don Nazzal on November 20, 2002 at the Yacht Racing Association of San Francisco Bay Winners Ceremony at Bay View Boat Club by Past US SAILING Board Member Tom Allen, Jr. on behalf of US SAILING.

Back row left to right: Scott Sorensen and John Kernot (from Elan), Front Row, left to right: Dennis George (StFYC boat Punnett), Rick Wallace, (boardsailor), Don Nazzal (Punnett).
John Riise Photographer

DETAILS:

Dennis George was the name of man driving the whaler. He was accompanied by Don Nazzal, a fellow RC volunteer. The Punnett is a 21'ARC. The boat was specifically chosen because it is reasonably low to the water but I do not know how they got the man aboard. I believe it was easier because a local windsurfer got to them prior to the whaler's arrival, and the two men in the water managed to get him on top of the board.

Best regards,
Dennis George

Nominated by John Riise, Latitude 38 Magazine

Here is the text of the piece we ran, written by "Elan" owner Bill Riess:
Saturday, March 16, was one of those days you hope never happen. When it was all over, everyone came through it almost surprisingly well, and we all learned a few terribly important lessons.

To go back a few years, my wife always urged me to wear flotation, and to insist that my crew do the same. But when we first raced our Olson 25 in the early '80s, stubborn machismo reigned: only a wuss would put on that stuff. Two drownings a few years ago - the woman who fell from a Merit 25 returning from Vallejo, and Southern California pro sailor Larry Klein in the Big Boat Series - helped change my mind. Before the St. Francis YC's standard Sailing Instructions required wearing personal flotation in their regattas, I had asked my crew to do the same thing, and stuck to it about 95% of the time.

This past weekend on Elan, my Express 37, we dropped the jib after finishing the second race of StFYC's Spring One Design Regatta. On the way in, perhaps 200 feet west of 'B' buoy at the outboard end of the StFYC starting line, we discovered a broken bolt on the fitting that secures the port lower shroud to the chainplate, and quickly decided to jibe to relieve the pressure on that side of the rig. One of our trimmers that day, Richard Beauregard from Benicia, stepped in to help handle the mainsheet, and I turned the boat's stern through the eye of the wind. I recall seeing the main come across the centerline at full tilt - and I saw Richard's back and legs sliding over the side before anyone could get to him.

The sight of this person, my crewmember, face down in the water and not moving, is an image I'll never forget. (Fortunately, the next time I looked at Richard he was floating on his back, but clearly still unconscious.) In the meantime, two other crew, Scott Sorensen and John Kernot, jumped overboard immediately to help Richard. Scott, a fireman/paramedic, was wearing full foul weather gear, deck shoes, and a foam-filled PFD. John, also in foulies but barefoot, wore manually inflatable SOSpenders. (After they reached Richard, Scott reminded John to pull the cord to inflate the bladder and activate the flotation.)

When Scott and John got to Richard, he was still out cold, bleeding slightly from a cut on the left side of his forehead. As Richard began to come to, probably 10 minutes after going into the water, he struggled to sit up, and began to lose more blood from the arterial wound in his forehead. Scott immediately began to apply compression to stem the blood loss.

While those of us on board were getting the mainsail down, Rick Wallace, a boardsailor at Crissy Field, saw that something unusual was happening, launched his board and was on the scene rapidly where he, John, and Scott used the board to support Richard.

The St. Francis finish line boat, an RIB, arrived quickly, and with some difficulty, was able to fish our three crew out of the water. Meanwhile, another crash boat and the W.L. Stewart (StFYC's race committee trawler) arrived on the scene. Expeditious, another Express 37, also stood by to assist if needed. The RIB then zipped back to the St. Francis docks where an ambulance was waiting. Richard was loaded onto a back board and sped off to San Francisco General's ER. The EMTs who put Richard in the ambulance told people on the dock that they thought Richard would be okay, and this was confirmed via cellphone half an hour later by the attending ER physician.

Total time in the water for the three Elan crew was 15-20 minutes.

Scott and I hurried over to S.F. General, where Richard was kept until a CT scan could be done. It revealed only water in his sinuses from the time he was face-down. Twenty stitches later, he was discharged to his wife, who had come down from Benicia. Hypothermia had definitely been an issue as Richard's body temperature dropped to 86°F and was just up to 96.8°F an hour later. However, Richard was well enough to be up and around.

Sunday - not even a headache! - and went back to work on Monday.

Now about the lessons:

1) Always wear flotation when you're on the water. Richard was using a red, air-filled Musto Regatta vest, one of the most comfortable PFDs on the market, and plenty adequate despite not passing Coast Guard approval.

2) If you use an inflatable PFD, make sure you have the auto-inflatable version. When you're unconscious, a manually-inflatable PFD is like not having a PFD at all.

3) Do MOB drills in which everyone has a specific task and knows exactly what to do.

4) Make sure you have some kind of lifting tackle - a Lifesling, for instance - both to keep the MOB afloat, as well as to allow that person to be brought back on board. After a fairly short time in frigid Bay water, John Kernot reported he could not have gotten himself back onto the boat.

5) Everyone needs to know where the danger zone is and to stay clear of it in case of an accidental or sudden jibe. The impact of the boom coming across would have been gruesome, almost certainly fatal, if it had hit Richard. The moving bundle of main sheet had enough force to knock Richard down, where he believes he might have hit his head on a winch.

6) Never think this couldn't happen to you. Richard has 30+ years of sailing under his belt, and every person on Elan that day was also highly experienced.

Finally, the heroes of the day were John and Scott, who without any hesitation risked their lives to aid a crewmate. I'd also like to thank and acknowledge Rick Willis and the StFYC race committee for their quick reactions, as well as whoever had the good sense to call the S.F. Fire Department for their EMT and ambulance. And a special thanks to the ambulance crew and the staff at S.F. General for taking such good care of Richard.

I'm sure others whom I may be overlooking also played a role in preventing this serious event from escalating into a tragedy.

Be careful out there!

- Bill Riess

Sorry for the delay; I'm taking a week off from work and although I am able to access and respond to work emails, I'm not in the office until next Monday or Tuesday. Is that soon enough? If not, I could probably talk someone through going through my files to get all the info you need. Meanwhile, here's my best shot at answers to your questions. (this

information was also in the draft of the original article I sent when I first notified you of this incident.) Your best source for what happened on Elan will be Bill Riess, the owner. I could have sworn I sent you his email/phone already, but my mind is a sieve these days. Could be I MEANT to and didn't. I will do so when I get back. He will also have the phone numbers for Scott Sorensen, John Kernot and Richard Beauregard (the victim).

1. Name of boardsailor was Rick Wallace. I don't know Rick, but from talking to people, he is also an Express 37 sailor and was watching that fleet in particular because his friends were sailing in it that day.

2. Don't know, but will try to find out when I get back.

3. Name of StFYC race committee boat is 'W.L. Stewart'.

4. Don't know, but Bill would.

5. Bill Riess is a longtime racer and has a very good and experienced crew. As I understand from talking to him, they very capably got the boat under control even in the windy conditions of that day. A complicating factor was the broken bolt holding one of the lower shrouds, which is what caused the emergency jibe (that threw Richard Beauregard overboard) in the first place. Again, Bill will be able to tell you exactly what transpired on board before they could turn around.

6. Scott Sorensen and John Kernot jumped over of their own volition. They were not ordered to go in by Bill or anyone else on the boat.

7. They were not attached to the boat by tethers or lines. Again, if you're on a tighter deadline for this info than early next week, let me know and I will get it for you.

Cheers,
John