

Charleston to Bermuda Race Set for Festive Start

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA (May 17, 2007)—When the starting cannon fires aboard the *Spirit of South Carolina* on Friday, May 18 at noon, 18 eager crews will cross the line, bound for the distant islands of Bermuda, 777 miles due east. Among the diverse mix of sailboats that will set out from Charleston Harbor in this biennial bluewater contest are entries that range in size from 36 to 70 feet and hail from ports as distant as Hamilton, Bermuda and Hamilton, Mass. But whatever these entries lack in common will be momentarily displaced by the festive sendoff they'll collectively receive from the crowds gathered for the annual Charleston Maritime Festival and Tall Ships® Charleston at the Charleston Maritime Center that day.

With eight classic tall ships berthed here—including the newly rigged *Spirit of South Carolina*—this little marina on the Cooper River will resemble a scene from the 1800s. And it's this scene that will set the stage for the start of the race, a highlight to the first of three days of celebration dedicated to sailing, maritime history, and maritime lore.

“We have a solid fleet of boats entered in the race this year,” said Brad Van Liew, Executive Director of the South Carolina Maritime Foundation, and Race Director for the Charleston to Bermuda Race. “The start will be fantastic with all the tall ships here, but then the competitors will have to get down to business. Though we've got a variety of sizes and designs in the fleet, there's a fair amount of parity among boats in each of the classes and that will make it competitive. We can't say if a new record for the course will be set, but we do know the competition will be hot.”

Buddy Darby's Swan 70 *Luna Danns* is the largest boat in the fleet, and one capable of making a fast passage to Bermuda, but she'll have strong competition for first-to-finish honors from a number of other entries, including Mark Weber's Swan 56 *Nova* and Joe Harris's Open 50 *Gryphon Solo*. Van Liew is intimately familiar with *Gryphon Solo*, having victoriously raced that boat around the world by himself in the 2002-03 Around Alone race. “If the wind comes from the proper angle, *Gryphon Solo* will be very tough to beat,” he said.

Despite the performance potential of those entries, the Charleston to Bermuda Race has always placed a decided emphasis on fun and the bulk of this year's fleet reflects that outlook. Each of the remaining 15 entries would be best described as cruiser-racers, many of them equipped with amenities that range from air-conditioning to ice makers. And one of these boats—the 45-foot *E's Alee* from the Ocean Sailing Academy—will have five paying guests on board who are crewing as students of offshore sailing.

Those students and all the other participants are likely to glean significant heavy weather experience on this trip due to the challenging conditions that appear to be in store for them. Though strong winds have been buffeting Charleston for the past week, the fleet is apt to start the race in light winds borne of a high-pressure system that is forecast to move over the South Carolina coast on Friday. Once the boats get offshore, however, that picture should change considerably. With last week's passage of Tropical Storm Andrea,

the conditions at sea remain challenging, and the official marine forecast from NOAA calls for winds in the 25 to 35-knot range with seas from 10 to 17 feet near the Gulf Stream.

Anyone interested in following the progress of the C2B fleet will be able to track the boats by logging on to the event's website (www.charlestontobermuda.com) and clicking on the iboattrack.com link. Daily updates will also be posted on the site.

The Charleston to Bermuda Race is sponsored by Bermuda Tourism, Gosling's Black Seal Rum, the Fairmont Hamilton Princess, the Charleston Harbor Resort, Bennett-Hofford, and Charleston Boatworks. The event receives critical support from The Royal Bermuda Yacht Club. The race is open to every seaworthy boat 30 feet and longer. Race committee duties for the race are managed by the Charleston Ocean Racing Association.

The owner and organizing authority for the Charleston to Bermuda Race is the South Carolina Maritime Foundation (SCMF). SCMF is a nonprofit 501c3 organization with a mission to offer a unique educational platform for students, encouraging responsibility, teamwork, and other attributes necessary to become future leaders. Other programs include construction of a tall ship, the Spirit of South Carolina, Charleston Race Week, Tall Ships® Charleston and the Charleston Maritime Festival. Support the Spirit at www.scmartime.org.

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