

# Weather Plays a Role in Race Course, Finishing Times

\*Continued from page 1

sailors is the weather.

"Although the race has grown every year since 1898, the elements of the race are all fundamentally the same," Ms. Kirchner said. "They battle with the Lake Michigan weather, no matter what is thrown at them."

The weather factor is always up in the air, so to speak, and sometimes the race is slow, like in 2004, and sometimes it is fast, such as 2002, when records were shattered. Both conditions require great skill in sailing, navigation, and strategy.

In 2002, *Pyewacket*, sailed by owner Roy Disney, broke the monohull record with an elapsed time of 23 hours, 30 minutes, 34 seconds, which beat the 14-year record of 25 hours, 50 minutes, 44 seconds held by Dick Jennings' *Pied Piper*, a Santa Cruz 70.

The multihull record was set in 1998 by Steve Fossett aboard *Stars and Stripes*, which completed the race in 18 hours, 50 minutes, 32 seconds. This catamaran was previously sailed by Dennis Conner in the America's Cup race.

"These families just keep coming back every year, because they love the water, they love the experience, and they love Mackinac Island," Ms. Kirchner said. "Everyone is wonderful to us on the Island."

In Chicago, the boaters all leave at intervals depending on their division, and, because of an elaborate handicap system, the winner is not necessarily first to cross the finish; it is the boat with the best corrected time. On average, boats finish between 30 and 40 hours.

The boats are handicapped with a mathematical rating system that predicts how quickly a specific boat could be traveling under various conditions. These ratings are applied to each boat's elapsed time and shows which boat actually sailed the best relative to its rating.

Handicapping makes it possible for all 300 boats to compete against one another.

Racing boats are divided into sections of between eight and 28 boats based on their ratings,



**This map shows the routes taken by nine of the 300 sailboats in last year's Chicago-to-Mackinac race, plotted by FIS Tracking Services. With boats now equipped with GPS transmitters, progress during the race can be tracked in real time online. The race is 333 miles and takes about 30 to 40 hours.** (Map courtesy of Chicago Yacht Club)

with each section beginning in sequence at 10 minute intervals.

This year there is a new cruiser division for bigger boats equipped with sails designed for comfortable cruising rather than racing. The 18 cruiser ships are expected to take longer to complete the race.

There will be a number of awards given away at the conclusion of the race, including a Mac Multihull Award, a Mac Cup for bigger boats, and a Mac Trophy for the smaller boats in the race.

The finish line is between the Round Island Lighthouse and Windermere Point, and 100 race committee members staff the race headquarters to keep tabs on the boats and their times.

Flagship Integration Services tracks the boats during the race

## Stone Skipping Champs Compete on Island

\*Continued from page 12

Records holder Kurt Steiner, the "Mountain Man," from Erie, Pennsylvania. He once skipped a stone 40 times in a competition, with TV cameras to verify the number. Mr. Steiner was seen sorting through his suitcase of flat rocks from home. He enjoys this event, because it is an excuse to get out and do something fun, with competitors who know what they are doing, want to win, yet have fun doing it.

One of the main reasons Mr. Steiner and Mr. Byars like the Mackinac event is because they

utilizing global positioning transmitters on the boats. Island coordinator Lloyd Karzen and his wife arrive on the Island Wednesday, July 11, to set up the tracking system, a trip they have made for five years. A kiosk will feature computers in the race tent at Windermere Point, with six or seven employees working them, allowing spectators to watch the race at any time. Positions are also posted at [www.fistracking.com](http://www.fistracking.com)

There are other ways the boaters can be tracked, including the 45th parallel call-in, when skippers must call in to give their bearings. They also call in when they are approaching the Mackinac Bridge to announce their name and sail number.

The 300 boats will race through the night. Staying up is tough, so crews work in shifts, or "watches."

This is an amateur event, and no prize money is awarded to the first-place winner. Each section winner is given a plaque and a flag. Overall winners have their crew's name engraved on trophies that kept at the Chicago Yacht Club.

"It's the passion that the sailors have, because if you stripped away the parties, the sponsors, and everything else, ultimately, this is a true test of what you are able to do, to work as a team, to go from the bottom of Lake Michigan to the top of it," Ms. Kirchner said. "They push each other and test them-

selves, fighting against all the elements. That's how the race started, and that's how it will continue. That brings new people in, and that keeps the people who already participated in it as well. It's not predictable, and races are never the same, because the lake and the race are never the same. No one ever knows what to expect."

In addition to family traditions associated with the race, there are friendly rivalries among the competitors.

"Many of the sailors compete against one another in other races, as well, Ms. Kirchner said. "There is some fun ribbing that you'll hear between people. Some boaters have their own little trophies that they pass back and forth, like *Pied Piper*, which races against *Stars and Stripes*."

This year, a party for finishing racers and the awards ceremony have been moved to Grand Hotel and require tickets.

"This is the first time we've done activities at the Grand, and we like to think that it will help the boaters, the yachting personnel, and the police on the Island," Mr. Karzen said, speaking of the relative seclusion.

There could be more than 3,000 crew members pouring onto Mackinac Island after the race, plus families and friends who meet them at the finish line. Mr. Karzen estimates the race could bring Mackinac Island close to \$4 million in revenue from food and accommodations.

know they will be competing against one another.

Mackinac Island's waters are seen as a bit tougher than some of the inland lakes on the circuit. The passenger boats create a water surface that becomes more choppy as the day wears on.

"It's a challenge to find lanes, but it's a lot of fun, too," Mr. Steiner said.

Although it might seem like shattering records is what stone skippers shoot for, it is actually quite the opposite. Mr. Steiner and Mr. Byars both agree that they prefer going somewhere that they choose, without the pressure of a contest.

"It's almost impossible to set a record in a competition, because

your only concern is to beat the guy ahead of you," Mr. Steiner said. "To break a record, you are going to have a high number of failures, and the more force you use, the less precision you have. To set a record, you have to have that combination of both, and you don't want to necessarily take that risk in a contest. You're just trying to beat the guy ahead of you by at least one. The high number doesn't matter."

The record holder, who works both with computers and as a welder, is currently living in the woods, without electricity. He got into stone skipping competitively when he was camping with

\*Please turn to page 17

**Login To Your Hometown Bank From Around The World**  
[www.centralsavingsbank.com](http://www.centralsavingsbank.com)

View a List of Canceled Checks and Deposits

Print Deposit and Loan Account History

Pay Your Bills

Reorder Checks

Send Us a Message

Make Loan Payments

Transfer Funds Between Accounts



**CSB CENTRAL SAVINGS BANK**

Sault Ste. Marie ■ DeTour-Drummond ■ Kinross ■ Pickford  
Rudyard ■ Cedarville ■ St. Ignace ■ Mackinac Island

[www.centralsavingsbank.com](http://www.centralsavingsbank.com)

# MACKINAC OUTFITTER

## YACHT RACE SALE!

KEEN

WETLUB

Miss Jim

patagonia

NIKE

ANGOR

Ray-Ban

THE NORTH FACE

Columbia Sportswear Company

MasterCard

VISA

AMERICAN EXPRESS

(906) 847-6100 PHONE • (906) 847-3750 FAX

Located just east of the state marina

**MACKINAC ISLAND, MI**

Hours: 9 a.m. - 8 p.m., 7 days a week

Phone orders accepted ▲ We ship UPS