

Lightning Southern Circuit by Josh Goldman



As winter snow storms ravage the Northeast, thoughts of warmer weather and sailing are not far behind. Lightning Team High Cheese, skippered by CPYC member Josh Goldman with crew Mandi Markee from San Diego and Nick Farina, a former Lightning boat grant recipient from Boulder, are ready to go South. Other CPYC members may be on hand for the fun.

The annual Lightning Southern Circuit is just a month away, starting with the [2010 Deep South Regatta](#) (3/13, 3/14) at the Savannah Yacht Club, followed by a travel day to Miami. A two day mid-week regatta, [2010 Lightning Midwinter Championship](#), on Biscayne Bay hosted by Coral Reef Yacht Club (3/16, 3/17) and then a jaunt across alligator ally to St. Petersburg Yacht Club for the the finale, [2010 Winter Championship](#) (3/19, 3/20 & 3/21), a Friday, Sat, Sunday event which is usually has conditions similar to Long Island Sound (with a more subtle current). Typically 30-35 boats will sail the entire circuit with a larger turnout at St Pete (55-65 boats). There is an overall winner at the end and the scoring is usually very close. Ched Proctor is a former winner.

The regatta for Team High Cheese is a logistical challenge. The boat gets driven to Georgia by another competitor. The crew flies in from Denver and San Deigo and somehow we all go sailing on Saturday March 13th. For those of you who have never been to Savannah in mid-March, it is quite an experience because it has the largest St Patricks day (week) celebration in the country.

The sailing (if you can call it that) is on two converging rivers (big current). It is usually not possible to see the windward mark from the starting line because it is blocked by land. Depending upon the direction of the current it is often advantageous to short tack the shoreline. In short, it is one of the wackiest places around (thank god it is only two days). On Saturday night the club hosts a great party, usually with local oysters. On shore if there is no wind there are black bugs. However despite all this we have the entire club to ourselves (including the bar) and the members really enjoy having us there.

Miami is usually the most consistent place to sail (and the furthest south). The club members are typically burned out after running the Bacardi Cup so they can't wait for the event to end. And then it is on to St. Pete which has a full service club, plenty to do in town (without the frenetic pace of Miami) and the best RC in the country. It is not uncommon for a day of the event to be cancelled due to lack of wind. By the time Sunday afternoon rolls around everyone is ready to get back home and anxious for the summer sailing season.

It is a fun ten days that requires a lot of planning, driving, rigging and patience. We all can't wait!