

Constant Contact Survey Results

Survey Name: North Americans Past Participant Survey
Response Status: Partial & Completed

October 31, 2013

Summarized by Executive Committee Member: Debbie Probst

What: A survey was distributed to skippers who have sailed in at least one NAs in the past ten years but none in the past three.

When: October 2013

Why: We would like to attract more boats to the North Americans. Many ideas have been discussed as to why our numbers have dropped off lately and what it would take to have those boats return.

Focus Points: Timing (calendar month); Duration (number of days required to attend); Quantity of races;
Cost; Timing in relation to Women's/Juniors/Masters NAs.

Results: 136 surveys were distributed; 68 responded

Summary: In general, the majority of respondents are happy with the existing format or would prefer a slightly shortened format—4 days of racing. The number of races per day did not seem to be a huge influencing factor. The current timing, second or third week of August, was most preferred, although an alternative, shortened fall North Americans had considerable interest. Of those eligible for both the NAs and the WJMs, few were interested in sailing back-to-back events.

Some of the predominant roadblocks to these sailors' North Americans participation concerned other demands on free time, family, work, etc., cost and availability of crew.

We, as an Executive Committee, are working to address these obstacles. The Lightning North Americans should accommodate varying budgets, entertain and create memories for families and individuals, and offer high-quality racing and learning opportunities for all abilities. The North Americans need to be a desirable event to attend, and we feel strongly the organizers of the 2014 and future NAs will do just that!

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Survey participants	If the Women's, Junior and Master NAs and North American Championships ARE NOT held back to back, and disregarding geographic location
Most years I sail at my own club	The current format for the North American Championships
When traveling to regattas	Other factors that have affected your NAs attendance
North American Championship length and race schedule	Other input
North American Championship timing	Let us know why
If the Women's, Junior and Master NAs and North American Championships continue to be held back to back	

Survey participants:			
		Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes, I have a few minutes and would like to answer 9 questions.		66	97.0%
I do not wish to take the survey at this time.		0	0.0%
No responses		2	2.9%
Total		68	100%

Most years I sail at my home club:			
		Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Regularly - almost everytime we have a race.		41	60.2%
Irregularly		22	32.3%
I haven't been out to my home club for 2 or more seasons		5	7.3
No responses		0	0.0%
Total		68	100%

When travelling to regattas (all that apply):			
		Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
I typically travel more than 4 hours from home.		24	35.8%
I typically travel within 4 hours from home.		39	58.2%
I travel to at least one "away" event (3 or more days) per year.		22	32.8%
Never, I don't leave my home club.		2	2.9%
Total		67	100%

North American Championship Length and Race Schedule: Rank the following items in order of preference, with 1 = Most Desired, 4 = Least Desired.

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.

	Most Desired				
	1	2	3	4	

Current length/schedule: 5 days of racing, 10 races scheduled.

Current length/ different schedule: 5 days of racing, 12 races scheduled.

Shortened length: 4 days of racing, 10 races scheduled.

Shortened length: 3 days of racing, 8 races scheduled.

23 Comments:

I teach college, and typically the NAs are after school has started and this makes it very tough for us to attend. I would like the NAs to be earlier in the summer.

It is virtually impossible to get a young working age crew to take off a week to sail the NA's now. Plus the cost is high in terms of accommodation and travel for the 6 or 7 days you need. If I take kids (have the time)it becomes very expensive for me. That said, I like and think the 5/10 schedule is needed for a true NAs; however, but I guess that is just not for me anymore. I might be able to get a crew for a 3 day regatta, but that will not be a real NAs in my mind due to the fluke factor.

I liked the format of Houston versus the traditional format, unless races could be added to make the championship series to include more races.

Short sweet more race's less standing around.

Taking a week off work to sail is very hard, especially in the current economy.

Racing schedule gets overridden by dinner/banquet timing at events and we sit on shore late in day when the best winds of day are present.

Five days away is a challenge when you have a family. However, I think 3 days of racing is far to random for a big event.

There should be more discussable options in the survey.

As much racing as possible in the least amount of days.

Let the Districts be the qualifier and focus time on the NAs.

The farther away it is, the more time I need for travel, and that could cut into time on the water. On the other hand, I wouldn't travel as far for a short event as a long one. What's long? Four days would count as long.

Eliminate measurement days that don't add value. Do random selection for secret measurement. Penalty if found out of compliance.

Eliminate qualification series, or carry over scores. Series that doesn't matter wastes 1.5 days. Round robin in smaller fleet could reduce fleet size if needed. Racing Sat afternoon through Weds afternoon would be better and not tax younger participants vacation time as much.

For our racing at the North Ammericans 10 races is plenty but if the schedule were to change we would still sail the event if we chooes to participate.

Including travel days the current NAs take most of my available time away from work.

Recently opted to do Masters vs NAs based on duration.

I have no problem going to a longer event, asking crew to take a week is more of the chanllange, Maybe Yellow fleet can leave a day early.

I'm usually burned out after day 3. Longer regattas don't go over well at home since my kids are young and not involved in sailing so when I take time off to go to big regattas its takes away from vacation time with my family.

I have not traveled to an NAs in many years, except for the NAs at Sodus Bay YC about 6 years ago. I used to travel to NAs regularly and found the scheduled days and races to be OK. Sometimes an individual day dragged on too long on the water, but in general I was pleased with the schedule.

More fun, not more racing

The NAs fall at a bad time for my schedule over the last few years. I miss attending. A three-day weekend would be better for my schedule.

The qualification series seems redundant as you have to qualify to enter in the first place.

More races is the key. Shorter if necessary but we need more. For 90% of the competitors a 2hr race is 10 minutes of competition and 1:50 of just sailing. An hour race would shrink that and allow more racing. In The same time period.

Go for 3 races a day early in the schedule in case weather makes it impossible to get races in late in the schedule.

North American Championship Timing: Rank the following items in order of preference, with 1 = Most Desired, 4 = Least Desired North American Championship Timing: Rank the following items in order of preference, with 1 = Most Desired, 4 = Least Desired.

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.

	Most Desired				
	1	2	3	4	

The usual timing of the 2nd or 3rd week of August.

Moving to the first week of August.

Moving the event to the Fall.

Moving the event earlier into July.

14 Comments:

Left an earlier comment on an earlier question.

Get good sailing weather don't fixate on the dates. There are always conflicts so go for normal times if weather ok but feel free to try a change to get better wind (Fall or even spring in South)

Both of my crew is in college and could not attend this years NAs, which effected my decision to attend.

Depending on location the timing will make sense to when local winds are best, re: a east coast event may be best in the fall.

Fall interferes with school and my job. Only 3 day spanning a weekend event would be possible.

No difference to me, except the Fall is not a good idea because it would prevent many juniors from participating as skippers and crew. Yes, the WJMs could still be held in Summer, but we also want them to crew and to skipper in the NAs. Some skippers and crew are teachers, etc., and many people find vacations easier to take in Summer.

Move to the best time of year for the hosting location.

Schedule based on known wind.

We MUST ensure that college age sailors have the ability to attend and compete to keep the class vital.

It should be between June and October depending on the venue. Open it up as you dont get enough boats as is.

No preference.

I think the time slot is pretty good now. Earlier in the summer and many districts would have a hard time getting in their District Championship Regatta and/or have it rotate through different clubs in the District. Unless you plan to drop the requirement for competing in a district regatta from the NAs, do not move it into July. Holding the NAs in the Fall after kids have gone back to school would be a very bad move!

Keep this event available to college and high schools kids.

Mid to late August is fine, but many excellent venues are not available until after Labor Day. Shortening the NA's (by eliminating the qualifying series)would enable the "back to school" crowd to participate as they would not need 7 days to do the event.

If the Women's, Junior and Master NAs and North American Championships continue to be held back to back

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
I would most likely only attend the WJMs	13	19.1%
I would most likely only attend the NAs	40	58.8%
I would most likely attend both the WJMs and NAs	6	8.8%
No Responses	9	13.2%
Total	68	100%

10 Comments

I don't qualify for WJMs, but I might Judge the event if both were shorter.

Depends on the time commitment. Given the current cycle I can not get crew for 2 weeks which is what is needed. If shorter maybe I could get crew and afford it.

Cost is a factor along with getting crew to do both.

Not applicable.

This all depends on the cost of housing. Some places are just unafforable for more than 3 or four days.

Don't qualify for any of these but the NAs - seven more years for the Masters

Despite becoming a Master this year, my son is starting college and the placment of the WMJ and NAs on the calendar will like restrict my ability to attend my favorite venue, Sheboygan.

Don't qualify to sail in WJMs

Tough question, will be interested in the answer.

WJMs don't really apply to me right now. I am neither a woman, junior nor a master quite yet.

If the Women's, Junior and Master NA's and North American Championships ARE NOT held back to back, and disregarding geographic location

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
I would most likely only attend the WJMs	14	20.5%
I would most likely only attend the NAs	35	51.4%
I would most likely attend both the WJMs and NAs	8	11.7%
No Responses	11	16.1%
Total	68	100%

11 Comments

I like the idea of doing both but again a time and money issue. Advantage of different times is if they are both 3 day events and over weekends I might be able to do both. Also location is an issue for travel time.

Cost is a factor along with getting crew to do both.

Not applicable.

Slightly better chance I could attend both if not back to back. Should keep them near each other, I guess. If not geographically proximate, risk bifurcating class that year: westerners going to the event in Chicago and Easterners going to NY, regardless which is the NAs. (For those of us 55+ or female).

Depends.

On the fence with this one, competing with other masters age teams may be better for our team.

Assuming the conflicts with college starting dates and these events are resolved.

Maybe.

Option 4: I may attend one or both in the same year if schedule allows.

Don't qualify to sail in WJMs.

WJMs don't really apply to me right now. I am neither a woman, junior nor a master quite yet.

The current format for the North American Championship is to sail a qualifying series, then the boats are divided as follows: top 33 boats to Blue Fleet, others split into Green and Yellow Fleets

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
The fleet division does not affect my participation	28	41.1%
The format in general does not affect my participation	23	33.8%
I would be more likely to come if the format changed	12	17.6%
No Responses	5	7.3%
Total	68	100%

11 Comments

I suggest you just split fleet in to equal size fleets (let ties go to top fleet) with say 45 max size but split at 45 or less boats then 1 fleet, 90 or less 2 fleets and 90 or more 3 fleets with limit of 135 boats. We can deal with fleets up to 45 or so as we do in Worlds.

I quite like the format.

I have sailed in both fleets. They have their advantages.

Let's try a open NAs to get attendance up, then just break fleet division into two fleets.

Use the Districts to replace the qualifying series.

Beats having 60+ boats on the line. Where would I get to practice that? Huge fleets favor the pro's who sail many championships (in several classes). We already have a blue fleet at 33, compared to my usual racing.

Fleet elimination with scores not carrying is waste of races. Format promotes winner that is not best all around.

However, should consider doing something like what they do with the Optis. Everyone would be more excited about racing against the top guys/girls. Additionally, you could sail the womens and masters with the fleet in this format and award seperately. Like white/blue/red Girls/boys in opti.

I am not skilled enough to compete in the Blue Fleet, so being sorted into the Green or Yellow Fleet makes sense. The qualifying races are fun and give everyone a chance to sail against all competitors.

I was once told by someone in the blue fleet, "Why bother coming to the NAs if you can't make the blue fleet.t Which is not true. Why have qualifying races for the blue fleet? If you qualify at your district you should be in the blue fleet. At the worlds you are not broken down into weaker fleets. If quality of sailors is concerned, limit it to 50 boats or a workable fleet. Now the districts become more important and it's a honor to qualify through the district.

Starting lines with 40 or more boats are very difficult and luck becomes more of a factor.

Other factors affecting NA's attendance

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Lack of crew often prevents me from attending the NA's. A crew bank or crew matching could help me attend future events.	14	22.5%
Currently, I can not dedicate time to this type of event.	24	38.7%
It would be easier to attract me and my family if there were more organized activities or attractions for them to participate in.	6	9.6%
I choose to spend my discretionary funds elsewhere at this time.	15	24.1%
I feel I am not competitive enough to attend the NAs. If more learning opportunities were associated with this event I would be more likely to come.	9	14.5%
I feel I am not competitive enough to attend the NA's. If more learning opportunities were associated with this event I would be more likely to come.	15	24.1%
Total	62	100%

29 Comments

Having said that, showing up to the NAs with a new crew isn't ideal. I need to figure out how to attract a steady crew.

I want to go and do sail with good crew. But have a hard time convincing them that it is worth the effort. You should be surveying some of the regular crews who sail but don't go to NAs. I think it is crew who determine not the skippers. Can we pass this on to crew for their opinion or do a separate survey for them?

Lack of funds and a boat.

Shorter schedule more races no qualifying. Do qualifying after each day. If you do well day one you stay in the top fleet otherwise move to lower fleet. First day is all boats one start

There are years where family event take vacation priority.

Time x Distance x Location x Cost + New Sails = Participation Time = Do I have Vacation Distance = Is It Within 1,300 miles one way Location = Will the Location Have Good Wind Cost = Are Location Cost Reasonable New Sails = To Be Competitive have to Have Fresh Sails

The cost of entry, and cost of travel, etc. are a drawback. Entry fees continue to rachet up. If you take your family, it really isn't a vacation. At this time, choosing a different type of vacation is a better use of our resources.

Work is hectic and vacation time is limited.

None of these would get me to attend.

The issue is to maintain a competitive boat and sails just got out of control and I am over the bullshit yelling and rules bluffing on the water.

My costs is babysitting. Not only is it very expensive but it is difficult to make arrangements that are comfortable for all involved for that matter for the boats with Juniors and that is a good thing as it gets new people in the class. Don't worry about us older guys so much for NA's. Maybe do a Masters with bands of masters like Laser. Total age say 100, 130, 150 and have us race together on a 2 - 3 day weekend instead of mid week. I would go to weekend for MAseters easier than mid week. (I am old enough to get be able to do it as a weekend regatta with regular crew and get a good age total.) Might be more of that. Have it near the NAs the weekend before and I might even leave my boat(and car) for some kids to use.

A Midwest or Southwest/TX NAs at least once every three years or every other year. Its too far for CA boats to drive to East Coast. Or more charter availability.

We have a strong core of top level active people. I think where we lack is in developing mid-range and new blood. I also think we need to look at what the windward lewards have done to racing the lightning, It has reduced the crew weight making it harder for 170+ crews to compete.....which means friends can't sail on the same boat for now have to generally be sailed with people of generational age differences. Also, I think we have taken the excitement away from the boat by not sailing reaches.

Its a vacation for most. Keep the hassle to a minimum. Select clubs with enough hoists, along with boat and car parking. Most people are living out of the car and a duffle bag for a week. Keep it simple and fun.

The times I've participated is due to peers/crew mates pushing me to make time.

I am excited to hear that the NAs may be going to Sheboygan. But I still cringe at the cost of a new set of sails, but it makes no sense blow a ton of money on travel, rooms, meals, and entry fees to watch everyone sail away...

Thank you!!!!

- 1.) Eliminate the qualifiers.
- 2.) Shorten the regatta to 3 days
- 3.) Limit to 75 boats in one fleet
- 4.) Districts determine eligible boats.
- 5.) Alternate the dates such as trying the fall or spring.
- 6.) Consider allowing just two sailors per boat if total weight is over 420lbs

I continue to sail in enough Southeastern District Regattas to qualify for the season championships. Traveling to NAs has been off my schedule since I attended the NAs in Annapolis. I'm not competitive and seldom have good crew so it has always been very unrewarding. I think the format is still fine and I used to enjoy being involved. going through the qualifying rounds and then the fleet series gives you two regattas in one week.

I asked some people why they chose the WJMs over the NAs. Some said the format worked better, they could get 3 days off easier than a week. Some said they came because I was able to line up crew for them. Some said the cost was the reason, the shorter event meant fewer overnights and meals. Some said the location was the key, it was just closer to home.

No one gave me any feedback that we had done something right in our arrangements: no one said they liked the shore-side activities we planned, the food, the venue, or any choice we had made (other than finding crew for 3 or 5 boats). It was disappointing! We were just in the right place at the right time.

Hope the survey results are actionable.

Fall lightning NAs would've great.

I have gone to theNAs several times. My contrain is time. We also race our FARR 11S, so between that, family, and a very attractive business, I simply lack the time for the NAs.

After steering the boat for 20 years, we finally are switching it up. Last outing everyone steered in at least one race, and we had a blast. I got to do all the things I wanted the crew to do better and everyone else got to do a better job of steering. Articles on being the middle or forward crew in the boat would be interesting. Articles on teams that have a long history would be interesting.

In general there are many competing events for our time. Keeping the racing event shorter is better for us. A continued focus to attract new skippers/owners as well as helping the existing skippers improve needs is appreciated.

Thank you for asking the questions and gathering the data. I hope it helps give a more full picture of how the sport, class and our leisure time is changing. We have great boats, great people and a great class organization. I've seen it over the past 30 years, when we change we always have greater participation after the change. When we don't ask or change we wither.

You go girl!

I would like to see the NAs sailed as one fleet. Many other classes sail regatta's wih 70 to 100 boats.

Although I have not had great difficulty, a crew bank in general for the different districts might be of value to some of my fellow skippers who find the task of searching for crew onerous and limiting to their participation.

The cost to attend these events is getting very high, especially when the venue is held in high cost areas of the country.

This is a great fleet with great leaders.

Thanks for all your hard work on behalf of the Lightning Class.

We have always enjoyed the NAs, especially when we sailed with our daughter. It has been a dream run, but as stated before, we needed to do some other activities.

I think the Lightning Class is one of the best run classes in North America. The competition and the competitors are very inviting and make it easy to attend these events. Unfortunately my schedule and the economy has limited my participation. Hope to do more in the future.

All One fleet would be fine with me, I prefer large championships.

I think we should make it so that as long as you sail your districts you qualify for the NA's regardless of how you finish. This would make it easier to plan in advance and eliminate the stress.