

MIDWEST TEEN LIGHTNING CLINIC AT LAKE WAWASEE



Lake Wawasee, Indiana, May 26, 2015 -- During Memorial Day weekend, the Wawasee Yacht Club (ILCA Fleet 154) played host to the inaugural Midwest Teen Lightning Clinic & FunFest -- and by all accounts the event exceeded everyone's expectations. Twenty-one participants between the ages of 14-19 made up seven Lightning teams for this two-day celebration of fun, friends, food, and youth sailing!

Conceived by ILCA President Debbie Probst during last fall's Hoosier Regatta, the former WYC member expressed that Lake Wawasee would be an ideal venue for an early-season youth Lightning event where teens from all over could gather for a weekend of coaching, camaraderie, and fun. Fellow regatta participants and youth sailing advocates, Todd and Kristine Wake, immediately volunteered their support for such an endeavor.

During the months that followed, the concept was further developed, the purpose and goals were defined, and in March the official Notice of Event was posted on the ILCA website.

In short, the goals were to attract a group of teenage sailors where both established teams and individual sailors alike would benefit from on- and off-the-water instruction on specific racing elements, including rules, starting and upwind tactics, jibing, and even safely launching and retrieving boats. The overarching purpose was to host a teen-centric event where kids could receive expert instruction, improve individual and team skills, make new friends, and amplify everyone's sailing enthusiasm, all while having a great time with their peers.

Thanks to Debbie & Adam Probst and Kristine & Todd Wake for their dedication and commitment toward making this a quality and productive event. Collectively, they brought eleven teens and two boats, PLUS they served as expert coaches and mentors throughout the weekend. Further, Adam's mother, Katie, housed all out-of-town guests at her lake home.

Also, many thanks go to Donna Schmahl who coordinated and served all the food; to Judy (Schmahl) and Bob Eppich for hosting Sunday night's party; to fleet 154 members who made their Lightnings available for use (Brad Wagnon, Bill Allen, George Buckingham, Michael Schmahl, and Stuart Webster); to Ken and Sally Gindling for facilitating the infamous Flamingo Races; and to all the members of the Wawasee Yacht Club for their absolute support and hospitality.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the **ILCA's Limbaugh Fund** committee and the **Indiana Sailing Foundation**, both of whom provided generous financial grants in support of this important event.

Jeff Schmahl, #15565
Wawasee Yacht Club



Junior Clinic Report Doug Wake

I guess that the most fitting word to describe this past weekend is "epic". I don't think there is a better way to sum up the incredible camaraderie and fun had at Lake Wawasee for the inaugural Spring Youth Clinic. This event was designed for maximum fun, and the organizers achieved their goal and more.

It all started out, for my team, on Friday night at the Probst's house. We rolled in at 11:15 and immediately clicked with the other teams at our temporary base. Ping-pong (or should I say table tennis...) ensued and we capped Friday night with Saturday morning, hitting the hay at one A.M., resting up for the great day of sailing to come.

Saturday started with exactly what you would expect. Frisbee, and soccer, and more and more and more of each. We braved the devilish grass, making our feet into mincemeat, and had an absolute ball. After our games were over, the teams split into groups and traveled to stations run by mentors and coaches, designed to step up the young sailor's Lightning skills. Our appetites had been stirred enough by then that lunch had to come next, followed by sailing. The wind was puffy and variable. I would list a direction, but, just like during the sailing, it would shift 90 degrees and prove me wrong. We did a small course, first for drills and mark rounding practice, then ran a few races. After that, the fleet was done, ready for a quick debrief and more sports. The pre-program program came next, with Todd Wake handing out some Wisconsin made microbrew soda, and some spliced lines to connect jib blocks. More soccer and ultimate frisbee (you probably think that's all we did) were played, and dinner, pizza came. Everyone hung out upstairs and chatted, which was what made this regatta special. To quote Andrew Schmahl, "The camaraderie between all the youth is what made the regatta so much fun for the participants". That quote is perfect, because, we all come to these regattas to sail, and yes, we want good competition and racing, but the bonds that are formed and lifelong friendships made and maintained are what really is special about sailing, especially in the Lightning Class. After everyone disbanded, at the Probst house now, a heated game of Kemps started while other played ping-pong and talked. It was the epitome of meeting people and instantly connecting.

Sunday was scheduled for the sailors in the clinic to participate in WYC's Memorial Day series. The breeze was highly variable and the juniors found great success. Doug Wake won the first race, sailing with Issie Buerger and Noah Bartelt. Tanner Probst with his sister Jenna and Robbie Robinson edged Bill Allen to win the second race of the day. Brad Wagnon, definitely not a junior, won the third race in a horizon job, with Tanner taking second. On a quick side note, thanks to the WYC R.C. for getting off three races in tough conditions. Tanner Probst summed things up, saying, "Great regatta where we could meet new people and share tips. It felt like everyone improved a lot.". The fleet came in, lunched, and played more... you guessed it, frisbee and soccer. We started to head home, a few of us sailors jumping on the tube behind the pontoon for a joyride home, but Mr. Probst would have none of slow and straight. He proceeded to violently flip us, with Robbie carrying all his stuff... After heading home and freshening up (debatably), the teams went to the Schmahl house for a spectacular party and program. Thanks to Judy and Bob Eppich for being such great hosts and providing enough food for tons of hungry teenagers. From the hot tub to erratic frisbee throws, that night was definitely one to remember. A shortened (but never short. Thanks, Jeff) program gave all the sailors and coaches some mementoes to help them remember the regatta and clear out some spare goods. After that we went on the pontoon and headed home, where Kemps picked up right where it left off, Tanner Probst and myself continuing our domination of Jenna Probst and Caroline Dunbar, and ended moderately early, anticipating an early departure.

There is no way that this regatta even could have happened without the effort and generosity of so many people, so I have a few thank you's to make on behalf of all the sailors. Firstly, thank you to Jeff Schmahl, the local organizer and schemer. You coordinated all of this and really created the weekend that happened. Next, thanks to the coaches and mentors at the regatta- Todd Wake, Kristine Wake, Debbie Probst, and Adam Probst. You all created grounds for the great improvement shown in all the competitors. Thirdly, thank you to all WYC fleet members that loaned their boats for use. It was extremely important in getting more teams on the water. Thanks to all WYC members, for letting us use your beautiful facility, and also a thanks to those who housed sailors. I can't think of a venue where I would rather have had this event. Thank you also to all of the young sailors that came and participated. You all sculpted this past weekend into one of the best experiences of young people's lives. And finally, thank you greatly to all the members of the Limbaugh Fund (learn more about Limbaugh fund here-<http://lightningclass.org/membership/donations/donate.asp>) Your generous gifts made this event financially possible. All of us junior sailors greatly appreciate your donations and acceptance to donate to this event. If I missed you specifically for something you've done, thank you for your effort.

Events like this are key for keeping young sailors in the class, and I believe that the Youth Clinic absolutely created a bond to the Lightning Class and the people in it that should sustain members and bring in new ones. This weekend proved what a great youth presence we can have at regattas and how vital it is to the class' growth. Robbie put it well, stating that the Clinic was a, "Great time meeting new people and a lot of fun sailing". Once again, we aren't here just for the sailing, but for the people, and that's what makes the Class so special. I hope to see all of you out there in this coming season. It'll be a fun one.

