



## Huge fleet for Annapolis NOOD

Published on May 3rd, 2017

Over two hundred boats and more than 1,200 sailors from as far away as California, Texas, and Canada are on their way to the famed Chesapeake sailing capital for the Helly Hansen NOOD Regatta Annapolis on May 5-7. As the third stop for the 2017 Helly Hansen NOOD Regatta Series, the event will host 15 classes and two PHRF divisions in the North Sails Rally.

For some, the regatta brings another spring tune-up event, but for others, like the newcomers in the Ensign class, the Helly Hansen NOOD Regatta Annapolis marks the first major event of the season.

“This is our first opportunity to race in Annapolis,” says Joel VerPlank, making the trek from his home sailing club in Killen, Alabama, “I’ve got a good crew put together and we’re going to give it a shot and have some fun.”

For VerPlank, the Helly Hansen NOOD Regatta is the first stop on the road the national championship in Cedarville, Michigan, in August — but this weekend will be about enjoying competition at one of the first events open to boats from around the country.

“The Ensign as a class has been strong since the boat was first produced in 1962. The Ensigns face the same problems as other one-designs,” he says, admitting that the seven-boat fleet won’t be quite as strong as the national championship with 40 boats on the line, but he and his classmates are looking forward to the camaraderie. “It’s about the people that make up the fleet, we have a great bunch who are faithful and really love the boat.

The J/70 fleet returned in force this year, boasting 44 boats and a mix of corinthians contending for the top spot. The J/70s will be joined by a host of other high-performance classes, with Viper 640s, C&C 30s, J/111s, J/80s and Farr 30s all bringing healthy fleets and strong competition from out of town.

A long-time Annapolis staple, the J/105s will have 21 boats taking to the line, with the spotlight on the young guns of the Helly Hansen Junior Crew from Annapolis Yacht Club. Four talented young sailors — Annabelle Hutchinson, Ben Podlich, Liam Kennedy and Kate Riley — will make up the youngest crew at the regatta.

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Led by Annapolis Yacht Club coach Jane Milman, Hutchinson, Podlich and Riley are making their return to the event, joined by newcomer Liam Kennedy, and the crew has high hopes for the event. For the three return sailors, the 2017 regatta offers an opportunity to improve upon last year’s 11th place finish, and prove their mettle in an experienced national fleet.

**The Helly Hansen Junior crew. From left to right: Annabelle Hutchinson, Ben Podlich, Liam Kennedy and Kate Riley.**

2017 also brought new contenders to numerous classes – the J/24s, Alberg 30s and J/30s will face new competition this year. A strong showing from the J/30 fleet will mean 14 boats battling for the podium, including two top finishers from last year’s national championship, Bob Rutsch and Doug and Amy Stryker.

In the J/22 fleet, 29 boats will face off in one of the biggest and toughest fleets at the event. The J/22s will host former world champions, NOOD Regatta winners and talented newcomers.

“We’ll have pros and talented amateurs out there,” says Chris Doyle, from Youngstown Yacht Club, “the competition will be pretty tight.”

For the Doyles, the Helly Hansen NOOD Regatta Annapolis will offer some extra competition as a family affair. Chris will be joined on the course by his brother Kevin, the midwinter champion, and nephew Jake, an Annapolis local.

“It’s a class that all of the Doyles have been drawn to since the boat is so good, and there are great people in the class,” says Chris. He’s hoping his nephew’s Annapolis sailing experience won’t give him an edge, “it looks like it will be windy enough that the local knowledge won’t be as important as it normally is.”

The fleet will round out with the Cal 25s, Etchells and J/35s, as well 10 boats joining in for a PHRF pursuit race on Saturday at the North Sails Rally.

Despite the rain, the forecast for the 220 boats slated to compete this weekend is calling for 15-20 knots. For the out-of-towners, the breeze is a welcome sight, hoping to even the playing field against local knowledge. 3 days of intense racing and tactical battles in all the classes lie ahead.

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In 2017, Sailing World magazine’s annual racing circuit, the National Offshore One Design (NOOD) Regatta Series, will revisit the country’s top sailing destinations for another five-stop series, culminating in a tropical championship regatta.

- 2017 Helly Hansen NOOD Regatta Series
- St. Petersburg, Fla.: Feb. 17-19, St. Petersburg Yacht Club
  - San Diego, Calif.: March 17-19, San Diego Yacht Club and Coronado Yacht Club
  - Annapolis, Md.: May 5-7, Annapolis Yacht Club
  - Chicago, Ill.: June 9-11, Chicago Yacht Club
  - Marblehead, Mass.: July 27-30, Corinthian Yacht Club

Operating since 1988, Sailing World’s National Offshore One Design Regattas, known as the “NOODs,” are the longest-running and most popular sailboat racing series in North America. The overall winner from each event earns a berth at the Helly Hansen Caribbean NOOD Championship Regatta, hosted by Sunsail in the British Virgin Islands Oct. 22-27, 2017.

Source: *Sailing World*



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