

FEATURED CLASS: ODOM

Edina Model Yacht Club – ODOM Sailboats

by Gary Tschautscher

Let's start with a brief walk down memory lane looking at our ODOM sailing group, the sailboat section of the Edina Model Yacht Club. The ODOM class initiative for the group started back in 2003, when several individuals ordered a pallet of 9 ODOM kits. They were delivered to an airplane hangar East of St. Paul in February 2004. Following a group-build over the next several weeks, racing began in April following ice-out on the North Pond of Centennial Lakes.

Over the years we have been fortunate to experience a slow but steady growth in sailors, now counting 20+ active ODOM sailors and the number of boats well exceeding that. We also have been fortunate by being able to host a total of 3 ODOM National Regattas in 2004, 2011 and 2017.

Early in the year we are pretty much limited to meetings at our local "hangout", kicking around ideas of summer sailing activities. These are the months in Minnesota where we all possess the magical power of being able to "walk on water". That lack of any open water must be one of the contributing factors for our plans being a little on the optimistic side. Keep in mind, by that time the entire group has been suffering for months of sailing withdrawal. Of course that does not necessarily apply to a few in the group of wannabe Minnesotans, migrating to the sunny south during these "magical months".

Typically, we have 6-10 boats, at times as many as 16, racing for bragging rights. Over recent years racing has become increasingly competitive since skill levels have tightened up.

As already mentioned above, we have a strong contingency of sailors racing usually twice a week. Depending on wind direction, we have two ponds that work well. Smith Pond located in Bloomington, MN, has seasonal permanent buoys that we've designed to prevent keel snagging.

The other venue is located at Centennial Lakes Park in Edina, MN, a very nicely developed park area which is a chain of three lakes. These options provide us great sailing with any wind direction. The club's relationship with the park staff is outstanding and we couldn't ask for any better support.

This chain of lakes is also being used by the club's scale and power boat groups. There is not a single race day that goes by during which we don't have lengthy conversations about our



Figure 1. 2003–2004 Initial ODOM build at Edina Model Yacht Club.



Figure 2. Initial Build 1 & 2.



Figure 3. Nationals Winners Group.

sailboats with people enjoying a walk in the park.

One of our members has taken up watercolor painting over recent years. I caught him sketching during one of our race days and asked him to share them with me, as they are great depictions of our surroundings (as shown on the magazine cover).

Typically, we have 6-10 boats, at times as many as 16, racing for bragging rights. Most of us are happily retired with varied sailing skills. Over recent years racing has become increasingly competitive since skill levels have tightened up.



Figure 4. Nationals Group.



Figure 6. Smith Pond.

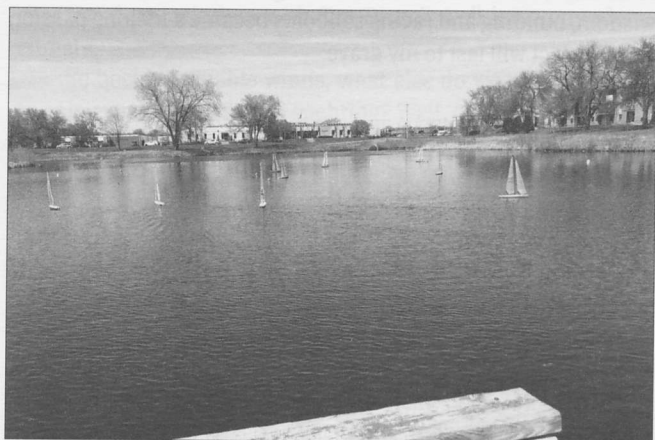


Figure 5. Smith Pond.

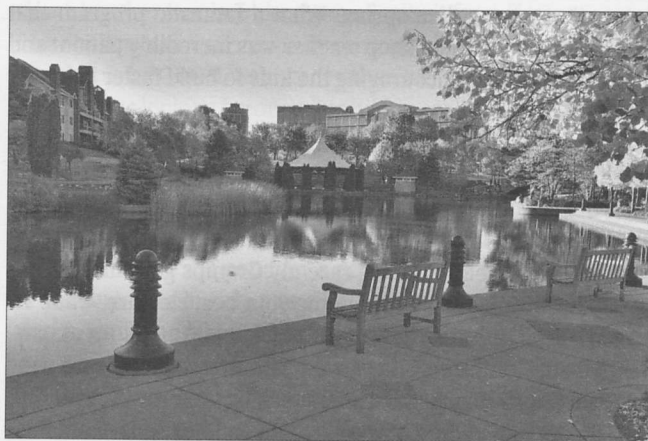


Figure 7. Centennial Lakes.

Of course, there is great camaraderie, plenty of fun, and then there are the all mighty sailing rules. My guess, just like in any other group, we have plenty of opinions and energetic deliberations. The discussions typically continue well beyond sailing, while enjoying a nice cool beverage at a nearby outdoor restaurant setting. Having said that, lately a reoccurring issue we have is not so much rules related. We typically race for two laps and a frequent challenge is being able to count. Voices can be heard across the pond, "That was just the first lap!", "What, that was already the finish?!", you get the idea. My conclusion is that we are just so focused and having fun, forgetting everything else—right?!

Sitting here in January of 2021, during a nice sunny and "fresh" day in Minnesota, I feel it is only fitting to mention the unique challenges of the 2020 season. Sure, the pandemic did cast its shadow. However, due to the nature of our hobby being outdoors and social distancing not being much of a problem, we counted ourselves very lucky. All of us agreed on one thing about 2020, we were very lucky to be part of such a great group of sailors and to have a hobby providing some form of normalcy throughout the season.

We took every opportunity to meet up at one of the venues, weather and wind conditions permitting. Rather late in the year, almost running out of time, we managed to still have our Three Pond (Lake) Race. The day turned out to be a picture-perfect fall day with an incredible blue sky. It is more of a fun regatta than anything else.

As you may guess by its name, we race all three lakes which provides for plenty of challenges and plenty of fun. It takes about



Figure 8. Centennial Lakes.

1 hour and 15 minutes to complete the race, sailing through very calm channels and below pedestrian bridges. Navigating the bridges requires sailing while losing sight of your boat and walking around the bridge, praying that the boat will "meet you" on the other side. Of course, that does not always pan out and you have to engage into a rescue mission. One of our sailors took a late year swim, while doing so. Even with all those challenges, only 3 seconds separated the 1st and 2nd place finish.

If my memory serves me correctly, our 2020 season came to an end on November 2nd with 9 boats racing. Looking at the calendar, there is very little doubt that we still must wait a while until we lose our "magical power". Looking forward to another fun filled season. Maybe we will be able to break the record of 2016, by sailing after the 5th of December!