NALSA Spring 2006 Newsletter

A LETTER FROM THE PREZ.

Hello all,

As some of you may or may not know after a long and successful stint Bob Dill has stepped down as president. I have agreed to take on the job, and I can only hope to be as successful as Bob was. Bob made many changes to the racing program and all seemed to be good for the sport and the America's Cup.

Some of the things on my list to do in my first year are,

1. Get a trailer or some sort of shelter for the scorers on the finish line. It's difficult enough to get people to volunteer maybe some comfort will help. I have a 16'

flatbed trailer that I'm willing to build up for the task and donate to NALSA. All we need now is a place to store it in Vegas and someone to tow it out to Ivanpah before the events.

2. Improve our relations with the BLM, Blokart, Sirocco and the European landsailing communities.
3. Form an international team to compete at the World Championships in La Touquet, France next September. We now have 6 people who have committed to going.
4. Put more information on the web site, i.e. racing rules and links to the BLM site for information on the desert tortoise and desert etiquette.
5. **Get more juniors involved in the racing as they are the future of the sport.**

It is only about a month until the America's Cup and things seem to be running along smoothly. People have stepped up and volunteered to do a multitude of tasks. But as usual we are in need of scorers. Hopefully the improved accommodations and some other perks will help recruit some people.

The America's Cup at Ivanpah is only the beginning of the racing year. Here's a short list of some of the other events, Nord Nationals (Superior dry lake), Cow to Cow (Smith Creek), Pac Rim '06 (Australia), Holy Gale (Black Rock), Misfit flat series (Nevada), World Championships (Le Touquet, France), Big Boat Coalition (Alvord) and the November Cup (Ivanpah) and I'm sure that I've missed some others.

Hope to see you in the desert,
Dennis Bassano, NALSA president
SASSASS@got.net

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Message from the Former President

Bob Dill 2/6/06

As we are about to see at the 2006 Americas Cup, Dennis will bring his considerable experience at organizing land sailing events as well as his keen sense of having a good time. Dennis is one of our most active international sailors. Last spring he sailed at de Panne in Belgium, achieving a second place in the prestigious Class II. Not bad even for as skilled a sailor as Dennis especially considering he was using a borrowed boat!

I have enjoyed my five year tenure as NALSA president. I have been especially pleased with the willingness of the racers, and their families and friends to help with the difficult task of organizing, and putting on a big regatta. Having everyone help with the event keeps cost down, gets everyone involved, and eliminates the sense of Racers vs Workers.

I would like to thank my good friend Bob Schumacher for taking on race management for the past five years. This is the most difficult job at a regatta. He has brought to land

sailing the notion of windward leeward courses. This course configuration increases the need for sailing skill while it reduces the amount sailing on overpowered reaches.

The rest of this newsletter contains an article by Phil Rothrock on the state of sailing in Class III, an article on the arrival of Windjet on American Dirt as well as another look at Sailing Rocks. For those few of you who are not hooked to the www, the photocopied version of the newsletter also contains an Americas Cup registration form and schedule.

The AC is only a few weeks away. We look forward to seeing you there!

Bob

Class 3 Racing at the America's Cup 2005

By Phil Rothrock

It doesn't get any better than this! A dust free surface, great winds, excellent competition, windward-leeward courses that caused lead changes many times through different tactics employed by the pilots – Wow!!! Superb racing!!

But nothing, absolutely NOTHING could stop the dominance by Alan Wirtanen! He won every race going away! The challenge for the rest of us who were racing was to see if we could still even see him at the finish and often we couldn't. Alan has honed his racing skills to perfection and his yacht is so clean, so drag-free, that he is able to go to weather probably 15 degrees above the closest competitor and at higher speed. It was an absolutely amazing performance and a pure joy to watch, even from one of the competitors.

Phil Rothrock took a clear 2nd place with his Class 4 aluminum wing but had lots of competition from the next three, Dennis Bassano, Bill Dale, and Ben Gooch. Dennis finished third even though he would run only his Class 5 sail at times and I don't think he even had a Class 3 sail. Bill Dale was always a threat but struggled at times going

downwind. He's still learning to run his Wirtanen style yacht which he sent back with Alan to the shop for what he calls "Warranty Work". We know he'll be back going faster than ever next year. Ben Gooch came out with a new wing for his yacht this year and is still working out the bugs but was often in the running improving to a 2nd place finish in the 8th race beating Phil by only a few feet. Tight finish!

There were times during the racing that four or more yachts were coming into the leeward mark in close quarters at 70+MPH and broad sliding their way around to head on up to the finish line needing to jockey at times to keep from hitting one another. At the windward mark hiking was the rule as the yachts accelerated at breakneck speed downwind.

This was the best regatta I have attended in the past 25 years in terms of wind, coordination, organization, racing, weather, and most of all, competition! What fun! I'm already looking forward to next year!

Phil in his current creation.

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WindJet on American Dirt

Bob Dill February 2006

The much-anticipated arrival of Richard Jenkins's yacht Windjet took place on Tuesday morning, the third day of the 2005 Americas Cup. He has brought the yacht to sail on our dry lakes as he has not had much success on wet British Runways in spite of several years of campaigning the yacht at Waddington Airfield. Richard pointed out that wind and rain are nearly constant companions at Waddington. On a rare day when it was dry and windy from the right direction, and the necessary observers were present, Richard achieved an official 113 mph.

Getting the yacht out of customs in LA took considerably longer than expected. The team put the time to good use surveying the wet playas around California and Nevada. Their reports helped NALSA keep track of potential backup sites if we ended up with a wet playa at Ivanpah.

When they did finally get to the AC, Richard was a bit worse for wear. It seems his girlfriend, Liberty, is a pretty good skier and, while trying to keep up with her in the woods at Mammoth, he got tangled up with a tree trunk hidden below the snow surface. He had a very colorful forearm and a pronounced limp that was only marginally better a week later.

It was my first time meeting Richard and his crew. Trying to get to know a 'competitor' through their website and the occasional email is difficult at best. I was a little concerned that we might have to behave as arch rivals. I was glad to find the Windjet team to be

open and straightforward. As the week went on we shared what we know (or think we know) about going fast.
Both NALSA and the Buggy Bash welcomed the Windjet team into our respective events. NALSA was prepared to turn the playa over to Richard if it got too windy to race. It was almost windy enough on Wednesday but the wind dropped back into the sailable range after a brief excursion above 30 mph. Richard was able to get in some runs on several days.
On Monday the 28th the first day of the Buggy Bash, the wind was back. As the wind built through the 20's with regular gusts over 30 the buggies came off the lake to give Richard the opportunity to see what the yacht was capable of. The yacht is quite impressive under sail with its sleek lines, flashy paint job, large size and high speed. Richard was able to get Windjet to a respectable 98.3 mph and to figure out some of the things he will need to do to go faster.

Smith Creek: May 2005
We suggested Smith Creek as an alternative to Ivanpah as it is larger and often smoother than Ivanpah and there are more land sailors in the Reno area that might be able to help the effort. Also, the story is, that the big winds shut down at Ivanpah as the temperatures climb through the '80's in late April and May. Smith creek has historically been dry and fairly windy in May. Richard parked Windjet at Bob Casey's in Reno for April headed home for a month. In spite of all the predictions of dry, windy weather, the wet weather theme that played out all winter near Ivanpah continued up north through the first three weeks of May. Richard was able to take his visiting mother to Yosemite and San Francisco but the Smith Creek Playa was getting rained on too often to get on for any serious sailing. He finally was able to set up in the third week of the month. I flew out for the 4th week.

I met Richard in Fallon where a departing friend had deposited him the day before. Faced with a week on the desert, we got a little carried away in the grocery store…we ate very well. We arrived late in the afternoon, in time for a sunset hike up Iron Mountain. The wet weather had done the same wild flower magic I found in Death Valley after the AC.

The next day we drove to Austin and then on to the east side of the Toyobe Range. The heavy rains/snow melt had made many of the canyon roads impassable. We

went to Kingston Canyon and drove to the top of the pass. Snow blocked the road down the west side so we hiked to the ridge from the pass (a little less than 9000 ft). It is about 2000 vertical feet and the walking is not all that bad (less bony than Iron Mountain). The view is fabulous. We could see back to Smith Creek, West to Fallon and beyond and south to Arc Dome. This is probably the easiest way to get to the high part of the range. With a little more time an excursion to the slightly higher Bunker Hill would be a reasonable goal.

On top of the Toyobe Range

Over the next few days the clear weather changed to a pattern of morning calm, afternoon thundershowers and, on some days, late afternoon wind. The storms started in the mountains, built into full thunderheads, which then backed into the valleys. The wind in the storm gust fronts was in the mid 20's to low 30's but was generally too short lived to clear out the dust. In some cases the fronts contained enough rain to make the playa slippery, ending any hope of sailing until things dried out overnight.

On one of these fronts, Richard got the yacht to 105 mph. Shortly afterward some rain fell. He was intending to tack the boat near the south shore of the lake but it quickly became apparent it was not going to round up in time so he pushed the nose into a jibe which the yacht was all too willing to do. Three spins later he bounced backwards over a small mound at the edge of the lake at about 25 mph. This disassembled the boat enough to require a return trip to England to make some new parts.

He performed repairs at Lester Robinson's shop in Carson City in the late summer. He then spent September waiting for wind on Smith Creek and then spent October on Ivanpah. He never got the wind he hoped for but was treated to another big rain at the end of October. It is hard to imagine that anyone could have such bad luck with the weather. One can only hope that we will be back to our more typical dry conditions in 2006.

Richard will be back this spring for the Americas Cup and will be staying at Ivanpah for some time after that in hopes of getting Windjet to the 117.7 he will need to

beat the Iron Duck record of 116.7. If he is successful, we will have to get the old bird out to see if she has any more left in her.

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More Sailing Rocks: Origin and Fate

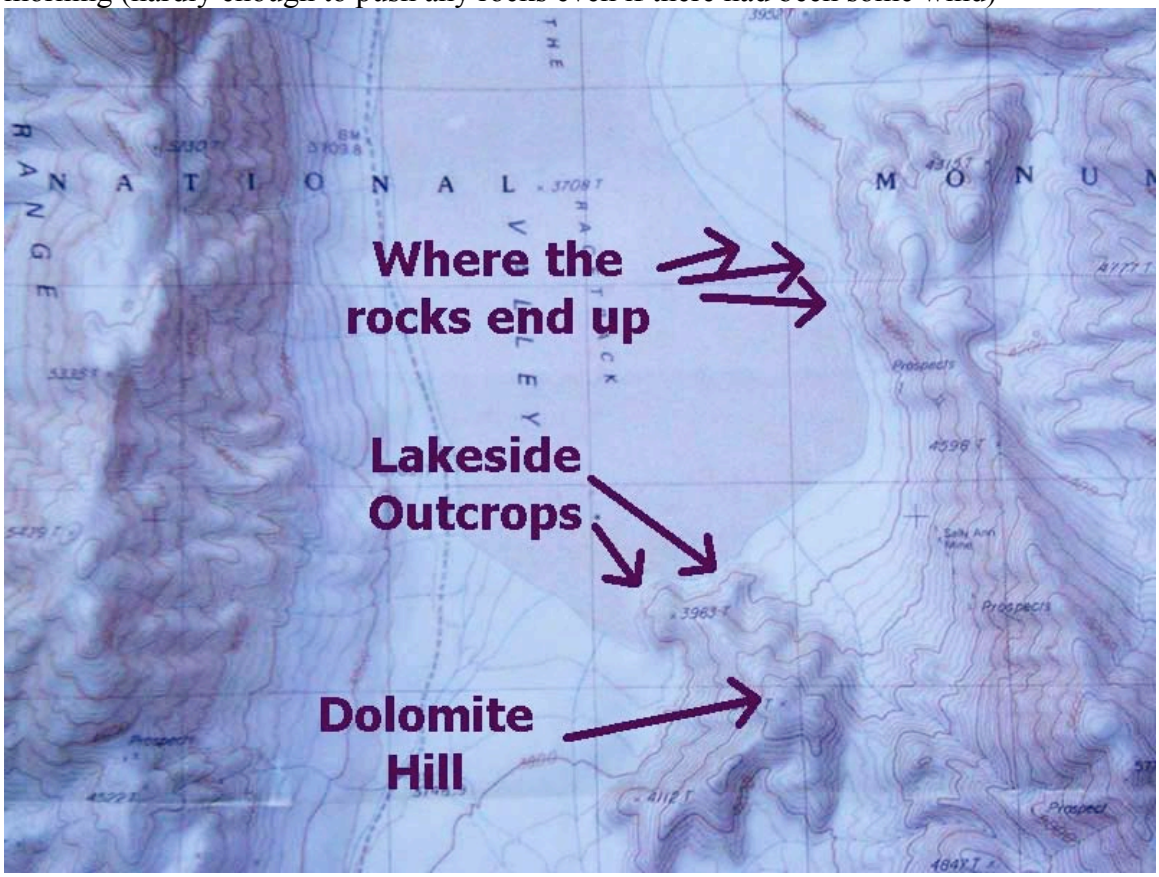
The wet Race Track Playa, January 2005

Bob Dill, February 2006

This is a follow-on to an article published in 2004 that can be found on the NALSA website. As a quick review, the Race Track Playa is in the northern part of Death Valley. It sports a large collection of 'sailing rocks' that sit at the end of long skid marks in the playa. One weighs over 700 lbs! Competent geologists have debated for years about whether wind or ice plus wind moves the rocks. (less scientific types have concluded that supernatural happenings must be involved). Western geologists seem to favor wind alone and east coast people generally favor wind driven ice sheets with entrapped boulders. I am confident that the eastern view is the correct one as the westerners do not seem to adequately appreciate what complex maneuvers ice can achieve.

In January (2005) I went to Las Vegas on a business trip. I spent the weekend in Death Valley. Rains two weeks earlier had turned the valley green with a scattering of wild

flowers….well green is a relative term. It was barely green by Vermont standards but spectacular for Death Valley.
The dirt part of road into the Race Track is about 30 miles long, is mostly washboard and has a reputation for more flat tires than any other road in the park (I took my time and did not have to change any tires). I also found my vehicle did not get very dirty….a good reason to drive slowly on Ivanpah.
With the recent rains, the whole lake was muddy and the southern end was under water. I hiked around the south and east sides to see where the rocks come from, how they get onto the lake surface and where they end up after sliding across the lake. It was a gorgeous desert day. I got some spectacular reflection pictures of the mountains across the lake. The water depth was a couple inches with a 1/8" ice sheet on it early in the morning (hardly enough to push any rocks even if there had been some wind)



Origin of the Rocks

One of the mysteries is how large stones find their way onto the playa in the first place. To be moved by ice (or wind) they have to be on the surface of the lake (not half buried the way most playa rocks are and the rocks have to be away from the gravely edge of the playa). Race Track is a rare dry lake in that it has cliffs at it's edge in several places. On the south end there is an isolated dolomite hill. Most of the other rock around the lake is igneous making the origin of any dolomite easy to identify. The hill is several hundred feet high with bedrock outcrops at the tops of steep debris slopes. When a rock cuts loose from an outcrop it can roll down the slope with enough momentum to roll out on the playa surface for 10 feet or more. Larger rocks are more likely to build the required

momentum. Smaller ones tend to peter out part way down the debris slope. This selects medium and larger rocks for status as sailing rocks. Since the playa was wet and impassable I was not able to observe the drag marks of the rocks but you could see rocks poking out of the water all over the place near the two points where outcrops were right above the water's edge. There were fewer rocks further out.

One of two source bluffs on the dolomite hill- note rocks off shore. .

The Journey

I am convinced the rocks are moved when the playa is flooded and gets cold enough to form a reasonably thick ice sheet. Strong (30 mph+?) winds then blow the ice and entrapped rocks across the playa. One obvious problem is, if the whole lake is covered with a reasonably thick ice sheet how can how can anything move? There are a couple of possible answers. One likely source of 'room' is that part of the sheet is shaded by the dolomite hill and the part that is not could easily melt or at least get very weak. The second source of 'room' can come from over-thrusting. We see this on Lake Champlain from time to time. It occurs in ice less than about 10" thick that has been through a long enough thaw cycle to make the ice porous (weak). It becomes weak enough in flexure to allow it to over/under ride the adjacent sheet at the force levels wind is capable of generating. This can also happen at the lee shore where the ice may form piles. I have seen piles over 10 feet high on Lake Champlain. The fact that most of the tracks go in a NNE direction supports the notion that movement happens in warm (south wind) conditions. The winds with a northerly component are undoubtedly just as strong but are colder, leaving the ice in a stronger and more over-thrust resistant, condition.
I expect the movement takes place over a short period (1-15 min) or in short episodes when a particularly high wind spell arrives, overpowers the resistance to over-thrusting and/or builds a bit of speed/momentum in the ice sheet. Based on what we have seen back east, the ice sheet moves relatively slowly: a few miles an hour at most.

Fate

I found a fair amount of dolomite on the east shore but it was in a relatively narrow region (see map) I did not find any dolomite more than a few tens of feet back from the playa edge (indicating that the rocks are not making it very far from the edge and/or that

the alluvial fan is expanding onto the lake). I found a couple of what appeared to have been larger dolomite blocks that had been disintegrated by weathering. It looked to me like the disintegrated rock both sinks into the playa mud and is buried by the encroaching fan sediments. This would explain one of the questions posed in some of the geologists papers. They estimated there should be lots more dolomite in the 'fate area' from many years of accumulation of sailing rocks. It is probably there, but in small pieces and buried.

Beached 18" wide dolomite block at the end of its journey

If you have a few days in Death Valley this is a worthwhile trip. I will be going back on my next trip.

Bob