

SPORTS



OUTDOORS / TIDES

B SECTION

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2023
NEWS-LEADER / FERNANDINA BEACH, FLORIDA

Club hosts interclub Ocean Challenge

The 2023 Georgia-Florida Ocean Challenge Race from St. Simons Island to Amelia Island was held on Oct. 7. Hosted by the Amelia Island Sailing Club, this annual interclub ocean race with the Golden Isles Sailing Club was a great success, thanks to the racing teams, beautiful weather and varied sailing conditions. In a nutshell, two sailing clubs, 11 sailboats, 44 sailors, spinnaker and non-spinnaker classes, the Atlantic Ocean, colorful "chutes," moderate wind to start, high gusty wind and broaches mid-race, followed by almost no wind, flat water with ocean swells and then the finish with a good strong breeze, whitecaps and tacking with crew weight on the rail.

The 26-nautical mile race started at 9 a.m. in the St. Simons Channel and headed south along Jekyll and Cumberland islands before finishing near Fort Clinch. The northwest wind of about 10-12 knots at the start was perfect for the spinnaker fleet and provided for very comfortable and fast-reaching for the non-spinnaker boats. With the winds steadily increasing and oscillating from northwest to west and back, the boats reached the midway point of the race in less than two hours.

Spinnaker handling with the winds at one point approaching 20 knots was challenging and resulted in several broaches with boats rounding up sharply before recovering steerage and falling back onto course. Passing mid-Cumberland Island, the wind dropped to less than 4 knots with

calm seas and rolling ocean swells. This "drifter" ended with the wind filling in nicely again from the north, allowing boats that had fallen behind to slowly close the gap with the leaders.

Entering the St. Marys Channel with the incoming tide and increasing wind, the yachts once again gained speed as they tacked towards the finish line.

Line honors for the first boat to cross the finish line went to AISC's Valkyrie, Justin Pelham-Webb's J/105, which crossed the line at 1:30 p.m., after 4.5 hours of racing. The next four boats finished within five minutes, with four more boats finishing by 2 p.m., very fast and close finishes for the first nine boats after sailing the 26-mile course.

The actual final race results were determined after applying time allowance handicaps, which adjust the finish times based on the known performance differences and other characteristics of each different yacht.

In the spinnaker class, first place was captured by David London's Delphine, a Catalina 387 representing GIS. Just 45 seconds separated the second-place finisher Morning Glory, Norm Wentworth's Catalina 355 from AISC. Third place was awarded to Misty, Wilby Whitt's Baltic 35 for AISC.

In the non-spinnaker class, first place was won for GIS by Contente, David Heine's Catalina 40-2. Second place was secured for AISC by Bill and Ann Kavanaugh on their Beneteau First 36.7 Tiger



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Vessels on the water, top, and winners of the annual Georgia-Florida Ocean Challenge, above.

Tale. Greg Zarus achieved third place for GIS on his Tartan 34-2 Gallivant.

AISC was the winning club in this year's GA-FL Ocean Challenge Race with the low winning score of 15 points achieved by its top five finishing boats compared to 18 points for the top five finishing boats from GIS.

Each club has won three of the past six races, so this wonderful interclub rivalry continues.

All participants are looking forward to the Coastal Cup in May, when the yachts from each club race from Amelia Island to St. Simons Island.

Complete results and

more race photos are available on the AISC website, ameliaislandsailingclub.wildapricot.org

The next and final race of the AISC 2023 season will be on Saturday, Nov. 18. All are welcome to race with the club, requiring just a club membership at \$100 per year. Visit the website to

learn more about the sailing club. AISC is a social club with a boating interest and anyone is invited to join. Members have sailboats, power boats and pontoon boats, and many have no boats. The club holds monthly dinner meetings, monthly races, and other social events throughout the year.