

Island Sports

Ferguson combines love of sailing with passion for design

By Stephanie Heelan Cotsonas

Islander Scott Ferguson recently won the 2008 Laser Masters US Nationals held at the New Bedford Yacht Club. Ferguson dominated the nine-race series where he had seven first place finishes as the next closest finisher had just one first place. "Things just went my way," Ferguson said.

According to Ferguson there was some good competition. "A guy from Canada took third place and he was second in the Worlds back in the day." The Masters include all those sailors over 35 and Ferguson said, "I am still sailing against some of the young guys as well as those who are more seasoned."

The three-day event held June 20 to 22 had 58 entrants from as far as the Dominican Republic, England and Canada. In the 2007 Master Worlds, held in Spain last fall, Ferguson came in fourth and he plans to head to the 2009 Worlds in Nova Scotia, he said.

When he is not winning national regattas, Ferguson also leads the spar design team for the 33rd America's Cup with the BMW Oracle Racing syndicate as well as being the head spar designer for the 2008-2009 Spanish Volvo Team "Equipo Telefonica" which is the Volvo around the world race. "It has been a very busy year for me. Exactly a year ago we signed



Scott Ferguson sailed to a first place finish at the 2008 Laser Masters U.S. Nationals. Ferguson took the top finish in a field of 58 sailors.

Photo courtesy of the Ferguson Family

with the Volvo Spanish team and got right into that and just have not stopped. Last August we were hired by BMW to do the mast for the America's Cup and since then it has been crazy," Ferguson said.

Part of that craziness stems from the fact that it is important to Ferguson to be there for the test phase of his masts, which means traveling to Spain and other foreign waters. He spent the better part of 2007 in Valencia, Spain working with the Luna Rossa (Italian) team

in the 32nd America's Cup.

Ferguson feels lucky that the Cup masts are being built by Hall Spars in Bristol, although the boat was built on the West Coast. In his own company of engineers and others, Scott Ferguson, LLC, he designs the masts and other bits and components that attach to the boats.

For the America's Cup, Ferguson designs as many masts as the design-build cycle allows. "We started designing right away af-

ter they hired us. We can design quickly enough so that we can build one, look at it, sail with it, and then add to the design of the second one and finish it in time for the new boat to be launched with it," Ferguson said. "Right now we are full on with the America's Cup, but in the design cycle there is a design and build so you get a little bit of a break. The testing phase for the Cup is all happening now." The BMW Oracle Racing team is based in Valencia.

The venue for the Cup is unclear, although according to Ferguson they should be told the location by mid-September and it will take place around March 2009. "Depending on where the Cup is will determine where I am going to go," Ferguson said.

The 2008-2009 Volvo around the world race starts in October. The mast design for an American's cup boat is totally different than a mast for a boat that is traveling around the world. "It has got to hopefully, knock on wood, withstand just about anything they are going to put it through. It is a little scary at times," Ferguson said.

He designed a second mast and the Spanish Volvo team launched their boat on June 12. The team is based and testing is done in Alicante, Spain while Hall Spars built the mast in their Holland factory.

Ferguson was also the designer for Roy Disney's boat called Pirates of the Caribbean which was a U.S. entry in the last Volvo Race.

While attending St. Georges in Middletown, Ferguson was a two-time High School National Champion and later he was a three time All-American at the University of Michigan. His passion for competition and the sport of sailing combined with his favorite school subjects, math and physics, have led him to where he is today in the field of naval architecture, specializing in high performance carbon mast design.

Ferguson plans to enjoy the summer when he can. "I find my pockets of time where I can take a few days off. I took a Friday off to do this last event (Laser Nationals), but I am pretty busy." Spending time on the water is all part of the job, Ferguson said. "I try to stay current and as involved as I can be with all the work I am doing and I try and get on the water whenever I can because it is pretty important to stay in touch."

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