

The Officers, Directors and Members of
US SAILING
are pleased to present the
ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL
to the crew of

MISCHIEF

for the rescue as follows:

On February 23, 2002 during the final leg of the first race of the Catalina 22 Midwinters at Kennedy Point Yacht Club in Titusville, FL on the Indian River, with water and air temperature about 70 degrees, a gust of 37-knot wind rolled down the course with 2-3 foot seas causing carnage to much of the fleet, capsizing Lil Flash and dumping skipper J. Christopher Woolsey overboard.

Woolsey held the transom for a moment, but had no way to climb back onboard and lost his grip. Woolsey's crew tossed him a PFD. Mitchell Richardson on board Mischief, with crew Keith Bennett, dropped out of the race to attempt the rescue. They tossed Woolsey a throw line and pulled him to the transom ladder on their boat. Woolsey grabbed the ladder by hand being dragged behind the boat. The force of the water pulled him from the ladder and he was free in the water again. The throw line was trailing and he grabbed it, wrapping it around his hand. Richardson and Bennett pulled the 275-pound Woolsey to the transom a second time. This time Richardson and Bennett each grabbed a wrist of Woolsey and gave enough lift to get his foot onto the ladder. With timing, Richardson and Bennett fell backward, while Woolsey stepped up the ladder and they all fell into the cockpit. Woolsey had been in the water for ten minutes.

Congratulations to Mitchell Richardson and Keith Bennett for rescuing a fellow sailor in conditions that were disabling sisterships. US SAILING is pleased to present the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal in recognition of this event.

Ronald C. Trossbach
Chairman, Safety at Sea Committee
By Direction

The Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal was presented to Mitchell Richardson and Keith Bennett on October 5, 2002 at Lake Martin, Alabama by Dixie Sailing Club Commodore Dick Cline, on behalf of US SAILING.

Left to Right:
Keith Bennett, Chris Woolsey, and Mitchell (Mickey) Richardson.
Photo by Jennifer Bennett

DETAILS:

On the first day of the 2002 Catalina 22 Eastern Midwinters, held in Titusville, FL, at the Kennedy Point Yacht Club, a small fleet of boats headed out to the race course, despite a steady rain and approximate 15 knot steady breeze on the Indian River. By the time the first race started, the breeze had built to around 20 knots steady, and many of the wiser competitors headed to shore, given the building breeze and rising chop. The committee did manage to get one race started, with some boats competing with mainsail only. On the third and last beat, a gust clocked at 37 knots swept down the center of the course, breaking the mast of the lead boat that had just finished, breaking the boom of

the second place boat, and almost capsizing our third place boat, Lil Flash, on which I was the helmsman. The rig almost went in the water, despite the fact that I had the mainsail completely luffing, and the blade headsail feathered as much as I could. It seemed as though the puff was enough of a lift to power the small headsail enough to flip us. At any rate, I was thrown from the cockpit into the water, minus a PFD, which was promptly handed to me. I managed to hang onto the boat, near the transom. I just could not get back aboard the boat, given the conditions. Some of the Cat 22 fleet keep ladders on their transoms. We did not. (We now do). What we did not know at the time was that the other guy on our crew had suffered a heart attack the previous evening (and he would suffer another one once we reached shore after the race, later requiring double bypass surgery (successful)). Given his reduced strength and my weight (275), I couldn't get aboard, and was getting weak very quickly.

At about that time, another competitor saw my predicament. Mitchell (Mickey) Richardson, a two time Catalina 22 National Champion, aboard "Mischief" dropped out of the race to take me aboard. Mickey and his crew, Keith Bennett, threw me a line, at which time I released my grip on Lil Flash, and pulled my way to the stern mounted ladder on Mischief. The momentum of Mischief made that difficult, as did the fact that my pants were filling with water as I was being dragged. I managed to get my hands on the ladder, but couldn't get a foot on it. I was too weak to hang on any longer, and slipped from the ladder. I managed to grab the throw line, which was trailing behind the boat, and wrapped it around my wrist, knowing that if I couldn't hang onto the ladder, I couldn't hang onto the rope. Keith and Mickey horsed me up to the boat again, at which time I grabbed for the ladder yet again. This time, they grabbed my wrists to keep me at the boat, I swung my foot onto the ladder and popped up and flopped into the boat, mooning the fleet in the process. Not only did they cover my ass, they saved it, in fine fashion. It is with everlasting gratitude that I nominate Mitchell Richardson and Keith Bennett for the Hanson Medal. They are the reason I am able to do so.

Chris Woolsey

Nominators Name: J. Christopher Woolsey
Event Name: Catalina 22 Eastern Midwinters
Sponsoring Yacht Club: Kennedy Point Yacht Club
Date of Event: Feb. 23-24, 2002
Event City: Titusville
Event State: FL
Date of Incident: Feb. 23
Body of Water: Indian River
First Victims Name: J. Christopher Woolsey
First Boat Name: Lil Flash
First Boat Length: 22
First Boat Make Model: Catalina 22
Rescuing Skipper: Mitchell Richardson
Rescuing Boat Make Model: Catalina 22
Rescuing Boat Name: Mischief
Rescuing Boat Length: 22
What was the nature of this incident: Man Overboard/Rescue
Did a Mayday call go out: No
Who responded: Mitchell Richardson, Keith Bennett
Was any injury sustained by the victim: N
Was a PFD worn: N
What position was the victim working before they went in: Helm
Was this day or night: Day
Wind speed: 37
Wave height: 2-3
Water temperature: 60-70
Air temperature: 60-70
How much time did the victim spend in the water: Ten Minutes
Did the victims boat lose site of the victim: No
Was a rescue swimmer put in the water: N
Did the victim have a strobe light or whistle: N
What color clothes were visible above the water: Red
Was the victim able to help in the recovery: Y
Was a Lifesling aboard: N
Was the race sailed under ISAF regulations: N

What type hypothermia included: Exhaustion

How did victim help himself back onboard: Held onto boat, grabbed throw line, pulled myself to boat the first time.

How did the victim get hoisted onto the deck: Ladder, with assistance.

Rescuing Crews Names: Keith Bennett

What happened: See above narrative