

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

SKIP ALLAN

for the rescue as follows:

On Friday May 3, 2002 during the Moore-24 Nationals during race three, the wind was 18-20 knots, with 2-4 foot seas. All of the 22-boat fleet was planing downwind at 12-16 knots, when several of the leading boats did windward broaches under spinnaker. Skip Allan aboard "Wildflower", a Wylie 27 was solo, spectating from about 1/4 mile distance.

When the third place boat, #155 broached, there seemed to be people in the water. Allan sped to the scene and found three people in the water including the helmsman. There were two crew left on #155 trying to get their spinnaker stowed, the jib unwrapped around the headstay and the boat turned around.

Allan deployed his Life Sling, and began a jibe circle. By this time, #155 had tacked back and converged with the group of victims and was able to haul one of them back aboard. #155 made a second pass, and a second victim abandoned the middle of the Life Sling rope he was holding, and was rescued by his crew.

The last victim, the helmsman, was clearly in dire straits, and sinking lower in the water by the minute. He croaked "help me" and seemed about to go under. Only the top of his head was visible. Allan hauled in about 25 feet of Life Sling rope and grabbed the victims wrist. He was exhausted, and his foulweather gear and boots were full of water. The additional water weight was too heavy to pull him aboard from amidships. His life vest appeared to be waterlogged. Allan worked him aft, and around to the stern ladder. The victim had enough strength to climb, but barely. He'd swallowed quite a bit of water, and probably had less than a minute before he finally went under for good. Allan sped full speed back into Santa Cruz Harbor, while the victim coughed up water. The victim spent 8-10 minutes in the 52-degree water. The victim recovered quickly once on shore and changed into dry clothes.

For recognizing a perilous situation, rendering aid, and rescuing a near hypothermic sailor, US SAILING is pleased to present the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal to Skip Allan.

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

The Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal was presented to Skip Allan on July 28, 2002 in Kaneohe, Hawaii during the West Marine Pacific Cup Awards Ceremony by Chuck Hawley, US SAILING Safety at Sea Committee Advisor.

Left to Right, Skip Allan and Chuck Hawley.
Tom Barrett, Photographer

DETAILS:

Chuck Hawley nominated Skip Allan based on the following letter,
5/3/02

Hi Chuck,

I got to put our overboard practice to good use this afternoon. Third race of the Moore-24 Nationals. 22 boats. Wind was 18-20 knots with 2-4 foot seas. All the fleet was planing downwind at 12-16 knots, when several of the leading boats did windward broaches under spinnaker. I was sailing "Wildflower" alone, spectating from about 1/4 mile distance.

I saw the third place boat, #155, go down, and when they came up again, there seemed to be people in the water. I high-tailed it out there, and when I got near, I saw three people in the water. The two crew left on the boat were about 100 yards away, and were trying to get their spinnaker stowed and the boat turned around. Their jib was wrapped around their headstay, and their jib sheet was snarled, but the crew left aboard did a great job in returning quickly. I learned later that the person who took over steering #155 is a Moore-24 owner and former class champion.

I deployed our Life Sling, and began a jibe circle. By this time, #155 had tacked back and converged with the group of swimmers and was able to haul one of them back aboard the boat. #155 made a second pass, and a second swimmer abandoned the middle of my Life Sling rope he was holding, and was rescued by his crew. The last swimmer was clearly in dire straits, and sinking lower in the water by the minute. He croaked "help me" and seemed about to go under. Only the top of his head was visible. I hauled in about 25 feet of Life Sling rope and grabbed his wrist. He was exhausted, and his foulweather gear and boots were pulling him under. I tried to pull him aboard from amidships, but he was too heavy. His life vest appeared to be waterlogged.

I worked him aft, and around to the stern ladder, and pulled him up the stern ladder. He had enough strength to climb, but barely. He'd swallowed quite a bit of water, and probably had less than a minute before he finally went under for good. I'm not sure his crew on #155 would have been able to recover him in time, even though both our boats were in close proximity. In all the maneuvering, #155 ran over the Life Sling polypro rope and got it stuck between their hull and rudder. For about 3 minutes, "Wildflower" and #155 were sailing on opposite tacks, tethered together in a seagoing tug-of-war. Neither boat was making headway, nor could we tack. I finally cut the Life Sling rope with my knife, and they pulled the Life Sling aboard #155 and cleared their rudder. In retrospect, being accidentally tethered together was not a bad thing, as it let us communicate that everyone was aboard and OK. At this point, the race committee Whaler had showed up. Once free of our umbilical, I sailed and ran the engine full speed back into Santa Cruz Harbor, while my new passenger coughed up water. He was weak, but seemed basically OK. Having been in the 52 degree water for 8-10 minutes, I suspected he was beginning to be hypothermic. #155 was alongside "Wildflower" for this return to harbor. He recovered quickly once on shore and changed into dry clothes.

His lifejacket was an older, light weight, vest filled with plastic bubble wrap. I'd say probably half the bubbles had popped. I doubt if this lifejacket offered any floatation. The crew on #155 are top ranked 505 dinghy sailors, and familiar with being in the water. The guy I rescued was the helmsman of #155. The other two guys in the water were the cockpit crew. The only two crew left onboard #155 when the boat went down were up by the mast.

It was a near thing. These overboard scenarios never go by the text...

Regards, Skip Allan