

Underwood sweeps annual Laser races

By MATT BALDWIN Whitefish Pilot | 0 comments

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A steady and consistent wind greeted sailors July 10 for the second annual, and still very much informal, Whitefish Lake Laser Regatta.

After meeting at Heather Mull's house at 5:30 a.m., a dozen 14-foot, single-man Laser Performance sailboats launched from City Beach at 7 a.m. and raced around an Olympic triangle course in the middle of the lake.

Race organizer Peter Aronsson set buoys in 85-foot deep water in a pattern that forced sailors to start and finish going into the wind. Each of the day's three races featured

one lap and tight competition in the front of the pack.

Aronsson took an early lead in the first race, but his mainsheet came untied, forcing him to drop out. John Underwood took over the lead spot and ended up winning all three races. Scott Galbraith was a close second, finishing each heat less than 15 feet back of Underwood.

"Those two guys were dueling the whole way around," Aronsson said.

In fact, the entire pack of boats stayed within earshot of Underwood, with the last-place boat never more than one minute behind.

"That's the goal in this kind of racing," Aronsson explained. "It gets down to the minute differences, and that's really good."

Mike Gilbert and Pete Young tied for third with 12 points. Underwood was awarded an engraved beer mug, and Flathead Lake Lodge supplied the grand prize of a cruise ride on Doug Averill's sailboat. A goal of the race is to promote the Whitefish Lake Institute, Aronsson said.

The races will continue next summer and perhaps expand to a two-day affair if enough Laser enthusiasts show interest. Aronsson says as many as 75 Laser sailors reside in the North Valley.