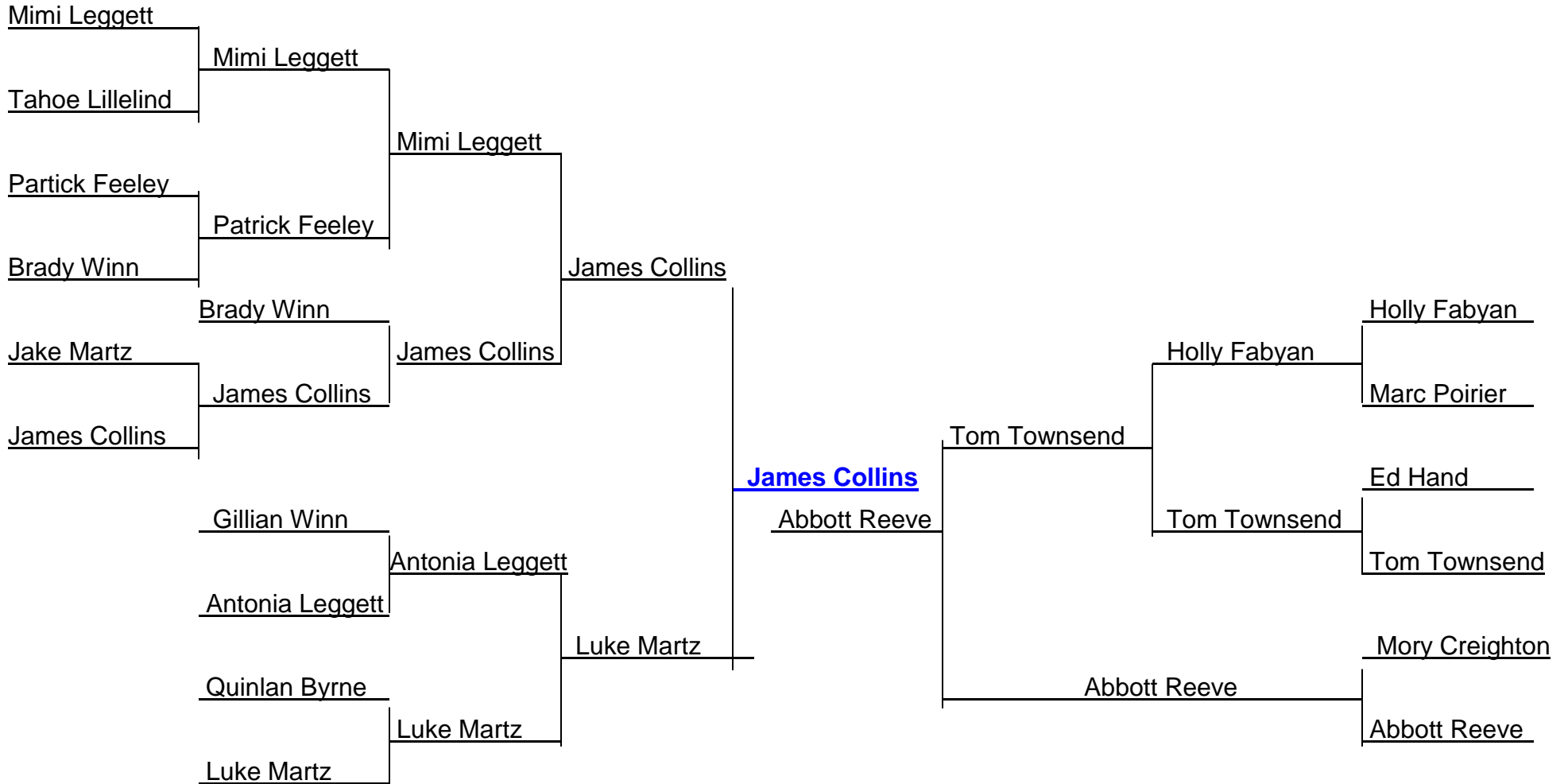


2010 TILLER TROPHY

Elimination Race Results



Sunday, June 20

Racers Vie for Tiller Trophy

The coveted Tiller Trophy was claimed for the second time in two years by junior sailor James Collins, after a grueling schedule of 16 match races sailed in Optimist dinghies just off the MYC docks. Collins bested his opponents in six individual head-to-head races in order to claim the title as best helmsman of the MYC. In the final match race, between the best Junior and the best Senior helmsman, Collins, winner of last year's competition, faced off against Abbott Reeve. Reeve, the underdog due to his age and inexperience in Optis, is a fearsome match racer with an impressive sailing resume and victories going back to 1959.*

Reeve managed to win the start of the final race by blocking Collins near the weather end, and held his advantage towards the favored left side of the windward leg. But Collins' experience in Optis came through, as he managed to out-foot Reeve in the light going. Rounding the weather mark ahead of Reeve, he held his lead down the leeward leg to the finish, despite Reeves efforts to take his wind.

The large pool of junior sailors competed first, with the match race format producing many tight starts, agonizing windward legs, questionable mark roundings and excruciatingly close finishes. The action was intense and the racers were motivated, having been informed at the Skippers' Meeting that Captain Dusty's gift certificates would be awarded to first and second place in each division. Mimi Leggett exhibited polished boat handling and smooth technique with well timed starts off the line, winning two heats against Tahoe Lillelund and Patrick Feeley, until she came up against Collins in the semi-final round. Luke Martz showed poise and boat speed with very convincing tactics, to stay out of trouble and get past Quinlan Byrne and Antonia Leggett, until he faced Collins in the final. Other junior competitors were Brady Winn, Jake Martz and Gillian Winn.

Reaction from the junior side was positive. Antonia Leggett commented after the race, "I loved the format. It was informal and low-stress. I've never match raced before, and it's fun to race against your friends one-on-one. Also, because of the Father's Day Gam, we had lots of spectators, and lots of helpful comments from people on the dock."

The senior racers found the format helpful as well, particularly the convenience of having the refreshment table close by on the dock when they came in from the highly competitive and thirst-inducing racing. The race organizers occasionally had difficulty getting the senior competitors into the boats to race.

The senior event was conducted in difficult conditions with light air and hand-eye coordination issues a major factor in determining outcomes. The race between Tom Townsend and Ed Hand had to be modified twice by the Race Committee, with the course being altered in the light air and strong current. As the two racers were swept down current and away from the starting line, the Race Committee, in its wisdom, decided to turn the old starting line into the new finish line. When it became apparent that the racers could not get even that far, the course was modified again, with the winner declared as the first one to get back to the dock. Townsend won by half a boat length. Holly Fabyan showed great speed in her decisive and relaxed win against Marc Poirier, but was eliminated later on a coin toss, leaving Townsend and Reeve to race for the title.

Racers of all ages, spectators, Opti Moms and Dads, and even the race organizers had only good things to say about the event. Reasons for the success of the event could have been:

- 1) Close and competitive racing in full view of the Yacht Club membership.
- 2) The Race Committee's ability to adjust to conditions and change the course at will (though this occasionally led to confusing and conflicting instructions from shore).
- 3) Flexible umpiring, such as allowing sculling at certain mark roundings and close finishes (senior racers in particular appreciated this innovation).
- 4) Immediate and non-recourse judgments by the Protest Committee.
- 5) The abundance of refreshment in close proximity to the racer assembly point.

However, a recent commodore was heard expressing reservations about the Race Committee's conduct and seemingly arbitrary officiating. "I'm considering filing an appeal with US Sailing regarding an incident relating to Rule 42.2 (C (ii)) of the Racing Rules. I don't feel that the Protest Committee was procedurally correct in throwing me out of the race that I won. I wasn't even there when they said I did what I did."

The unflappable Collins responded to the crowd's cheers as he sailed in from his victory with a succinct "thumbs up." Interviewed later on the dock he said, "I was very happy to be able to defend my win last year. The competition was great and I'm tired. But I'm really happy about the Captain Dusty's gift certificate. It's the first time I've ever gotten a sailing prize that I could eat."

Special thanks go to Quinlan Byrne, James Collins, Patrick Feeley and Antonia Leggett for the use of their Optimist dinghies in the competition.

* Members of the club cannot have missed the photograph (currently above the sink in the men's rest room) of Reeve holding his trophies from the National Midget Championship (Turnabout Class) from Lake George, NY in August 1959.