



***Island Flyer* Perseveres to Win 2017 Conch Republic Cup**

KEY WEST, FLA. (February 9, 2017) --Denny Manrique (Tonka Bay, Minnesota) and the crew aboard his Wauquiez Centurion 40 *Island Flyer* have won the [Conch Republic Cup](#) (CRC) with a best-overall performance in the four-part series that comprised this year's Key West Cuba Race Week. Hosted by Key West Community Sailing Center and Cuba's Hemingway International Yacht Club, the event took place January 22 – February 3.

Due to light winds, Manrique's team was one of only two teams to complete the initial 100-mile Key West to Varadero race within a time limit of 22 hours. (The other was *Second Star*, a J/122 skippered by J.D. Hill of Dallas, Texas, who finished first in this race.)



Denny Manrique's *Island Flyer* team, underway and at the Trophy Presentation
(photo credit: Priscilla Parker)

"The winds were from the rear, so trying to fly the spinnaker for hours on end was rather difficult, but we kept on top of it, changing sails and direction when we needed to," said Manrique, who – after the week's racing concluded – also scored a class win in PHRF Spinnaker. (PHRF Non-Spinnaker, Schooner and Multihull also sailed.)

According to CRC Executive Director Karen Angle, three boats that didn't make the time limit (*Terminal Velocity*, *Naut-On Call* and *Second Wind*) reported completing the Key West to Varadero leg under sail while the remainder of the 25-boat fleet headed for Cuba under motor. "There was some disappointment

about that, of course, but weather is the one thing we can't control. Overall, everyone had a positive experience, and our ninth running of the event was a success."



Key West Cuba Race Week is a four-part series with three distance legs that form a triangle between Key West, Varadero and Havana. The ultimate prize is the Conch Republic Cup. (photo credit: Priscilla Parker)

Angle said that the 90-mile race from Varadero to Havana had to be abandoned due to lack of wind. Also, a Northerly blew in to postpone the planned mid-week Castillo del Moro buoy race, which was then combined with the final race from Havana back to Key West. "The competitors had a challenging and enjoyable sail back to Key West," said Angle.

A highlight of the event was a visit by U.S. Ambassador to Cuba Jeffrey DeLaurentis. In fact, the entire U.S. Embassy staff watched excitedly from shore in Havana as the fleet rounded a mark by the Malecon before heading back across the ocean to Key West.

"Going across from Key West, we finished in 21 hours, 11 minutes, and on the way back from Cuba we finished in 14 hours," said Manrique. "The wind was more toward the nose, and we dialed into the 14-20+ knots of breeze, played the Gulf Stream current, and basically were flying across the ocean."

Manrique said he enjoyed most the architecture ("amazing"), people ("very friendly), and touring Hemingway House and Hotel Nacional ("interesting"). A highlight was exchanging burgees from his home yacht clubs of Wyzata Yacht Club (Minnesota) and South Carolina Yacht Club (Hilton Head Island, S.C.) with Commodore Jose Miguel Diaz Escrch of the Hemingway International Yacht Club, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

Said Commodore Escrch: "The Conch Republic Cup regatta was a very encouraging event, because it brought us a very friendly representation of 152 members of yacht clubs from the United States of America. Since 1997, the event has contributed significantly to the construction of the friendship bridge that we started in 1992, when this Cuban nautical institution was founded."



From left: Hemingway International Yacht Club Commodore Eschrich, scenes from Cuba (photo credit: Priscilla Parker) [Click photo to download in high resolution](#)

Manrique sailed with a crew of nine, all “quite talented and experienced” and some with whom he has raced since the early ‘90s.

“It’s so different preparing for a distance race than a buoy race, and just doing this event was a unique experience in itself. From those perspectives, I’d have to say everything came together to make it a great event. What made it greater for us was winning our class and overall!”



Racing action (photo credit: Priscilla Parker) [Click photo to download in high resolution](#)



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