

Sound *people*

Rick Doerr

US SAILING recently announced the members of the 2007 U.S. Disabled Sailing Team. This year's roster includes a sailor who has been named to the team every year since it was created in 1998: Rick Doerr.

The U.S. Disabled Sailing Team (USDST) annually recognizes the top three teams in the classes chosen for the upcoming Paralympic Games. The boats selected for this regatta, which will be held in September 2008 in Qingdao, China, are the singlehanded 2.4mR, doublehanded SKUD-18 and triplehanded Sonar.

Rick is the number one ranked Sonar skipper on this year's USDST. Also named to the team are his crew, Timothy Angle of Marblehead, MA and Bill Donohue of Brick, NJ. The trio competes as Team Odyssey. In 2001, Rick was a member of the USDST in both the Sonar (ranked #1) and 2.4mR (#3) disciplines. He won the 2001 2.4mR Nationals and the 2003 2.4mR North Americans, rating these victories as his greatest sailing accomplishments, and in 2006 he was named US SAILING's Paralympian of the Year.

"I started sailing in my youth, crewing for my father and older siblings on Barnegat Bay," says Rick, who resides in Clifton, NJ. "I mainly sailed on Lightnings, scows and catamarans. As a teen, I did more big boat sailing with my father." Rick now considers Long Island Sound his home waters, and he's a member of Noroton Yacht Club in Noroton, CT. "Distance-wise, it's equally close for me to sail either place, but the keelboat racing is better in Connecticut."

"I have a private practice in plastic and reconstructive surgery, which is my passion," says Rick, who specializes in hand surgery. "Some of the challenges on the race course prepare me for it, and some of the challenges of the O.R. help me put adversity on the race course into perspective."

Sailing with a variety of crew, Rick had excellent results in both Disabled and Open regattas in 2006. "I think I had nine different crew this year, yet still maintained some consistency," he says. In March, he finished second in the Disabled Midwinter Championship in St. Petersburg, FL, followed in May by another second-place finish in the Tappan Zee Challenge, an Open event hosted by Sonar Fleet 23 at the Nyack Boat Club in Nyack, NY.

In August, Rick, Tim Angle and Tim Donahue outsailed an eight-boat Sonar fleet in the C. Thomas Clagett, Jr. Memorial Regatta in Newport, RI, which is sailed in the three Paralympic classes. In September, Rick, Angle, Peter Wilson (2.4mR Class President) and Britt Hall won the 2006 Sonar Long Island Sound Championship, hosted by Noroton Yacht Club, which has been the home of Sonar Fleet #1 since 1980.

Team Odyssey won the US SAILING Paralympic Pre-Trials in Newport, RI in October, dominating the four-boat Sonar fleet by winning six of seven races. Rick closed out 2006 by winning gold at the America's Disabled-Open Midwinter Regatta in St. Petersburg, FL, sailing with Angle and Bryan Tabler.

This past January, Team Odyssey won the inaugural Blue Water



Alex Caviglia Foundation Regatta, sponsored by Shake-A-Leg Miami, and placed second in the Rolex Miami Olympic Classes Regatta. At press time they were competing in the Disabled Midwinters in St. Pete.

"Our immediate goal is to qualify the U.S. for the next Paralympic Games," Rick says. "We will have to do that by placing very well at the Interna-

tional Association for Disabled Sailing Disabled World Championships in Rochester, NY this September. We'll have some opportunity to practice and race before that, so I am hopeful we'll be up for the task, and maybe even win with some luck. The Sonar World Championship will be in Marblehead, MA in mid-September. That's a great competition, and it should sharpen us for the U.S. Paralympic Selection Trials in Newport in mid-October. The winner of that event has the privilege of representing the U.S. at the 2008 Paralympic Games."

Rick is the Disabilities Director of the New England Competitive Sailing Center (NECSC). The Stamford-based organization was "established to train and educate disabled individuals, and other competitive sailors, to the opportunities available in the amateur sport of sailing and sailboat racing." In February, he gave a sail trim clinic at Brewer Yacht Haven Marina.

"Rick Doerr is a sailing enthusiast and evangelist," says NECSC Head Instructor Howard Edson, who manages Pinnacle Yachts' Stamford base and is a Landfall Navigation Marine Training Center Instructor. "In addition to exceptional character qualities too numerous to list, I watched him stop what he was doing at the sail trim clinic and give his sole attention to a group of Sea Scouts [Ship 6 from Norwalk, CT]. He gave them all the time they needed to talk with him about sailing. Those few minutes speak volumes about where Rick's heart is, and perhaps influenced the life of a young sailor."

"Rick is not only a good sailor, he is a fine human being," says John Kruger, Owner and General Manager of Gavia Yachts in Stamford, the exclusive licensee for the Americas of the Norlin Mark III International 2.4mR. "He held class officer positions from 1997 to 2002, including Class President. During that time membership increased, along with the number of class-sanctioned regattas. He is unselfish in sharing his knowledge of sailing and racing tactics. He's a wonderful instructor and a role model for many. His energy level is high and he always has a smile on his face."

Rick, who somehow finds the time to coach high school sports, says his motivation is "to improve. I'm also trying to promote the growth of disabled sailing, one design racing and the Sonar class." Follow Team Odyssey's progress at necsc.org/team-odyssey. ♦