

# Grenada

Sailing Week 2017 took place from January 30th to February 4th, attracting 33 boats to "Spice It Up" in the Spice Island. Four days of challenging racing were held for four CSA classes — Racing (spinnaker), Racer/Cruiser 1 and Racer/Cruiser 2 (both spinnaker optional), and Classic — plus a non-spinnaker Cruising Class. Joining an ever-competitive local fleet were racers from neighboring islands, and boats and sailors from as far away as the USA, the UK, Ireland, Norway, Lithuania and Australia.

Grenada Sailing Week's reputation for first-class racing attracted repeat contenders such as the Ker 11.3 *Dingo* out of Trinidad, which also races in such high-octane events as Antigua Sailing Week, Les Voiles de St Barth and the BVI Spring Regatta, and which won CSA 1 class at last year's St. Maarten Heineken Regatta.

Newcomers also joined the fleet. Jean-Michel Figueres from Martinique formerly campaigned his B28, *Fiser*, winning last year's Round Martinique Race. Now sailing the Farr 40 OD *Perseverare Diabolicum*, and — thanks to a longer-legged boat and an invitation from Grenada-based racer Richard Szyjan — was racing in Grenada for the first time. He discovered that "Grenada Sailing Week is very fine: competition at a high level, good racing, good courses." He added that he found the multiple changing conditions provided by having some races in the island's lee and



Sara, at her first Grenada Sailing Week, appreciates the event's friendly community atmosphere

others off its south coast "very exciting".

Repeat competitor Bernie Evan-Wong from Antigua was there, too, on his RP37 *Taz*. He tells *Compass*, "We've been doing the whole Caribbean circuit for seven years and will do it all again this year: Grenada Sailing Week, Jolly Harbour Valentines, Antigua 360, RORC Caribbean 600, St. Maarten Heineken, STIR, BVI Sailing Festival, St. Barts and Antigua Sailing Week. Grenada is a favorite."

## Why Grenada?

In a region replete with well-run regattas, what attracts serious contenders old and new to the far southern end of the Windward Islands?

Bernie explains, "We do the whole circuit, but I like the small regattas. It's worth the effort to come to Grenada. It's smaller, friendly... some other regattas have become too big and impersonal. You might see your friends out on the race course but you can't find them ashore."

His crew Sandy Mair, who has previously raced his Beneteau First 35, *Cricket*, in area events including Grenada Sailing Week, elaborates on what makes Grenada Sailing Week special: "It's a very good regatta, but more than that, this is a West Indian regatta still — small, friendly and pleasant. You meet your friends; have a laugh. It's the last of the old-time Caribbean regattas."

Newcomer Sara, crewing on the Beneteau First 40.7 *Hot Stuff* says, "This is my first Grenada Sailing Week and I would do it again. Our skipper has done it before, and this is one of the Girls for Sail company's favorites. It's so friendly. You still compete and you work the boat hard and everybody pushes during the race. But after the race, everybody speaks to everybody; it's a lovely community atmosphere. We're an all-girl crew and we really like it!"

Sponsors are also enthusiastic about the event. Denis Laesker of Sea Hawk Paints says, "We appreciate this regatta. As Grenada Sailing Week Board Chairman Marc DeCaul once said, 'It may not be the biggest regatta, but it's the friendliest.'" Jacqui Pascal of Horizon Yachts Grenada notes, "This regatta is good for all of us in Grenada. Anything to do



Above: A keen contender at regional regattas, *Dingo* topped the Racing Class

Below: *Jaguar* grabbed Racer/Cruiser Class 1 victory from *Piccolo* by just one point



with sailing is vital. Yachting is our growth industry. And, we just love to showcase Grenada!"

Having spun off in 2013 from the Grenada Sailing Festival, which was launched in 1993 and once included races for both workboats and yachts, Grenada Sailing Week is now in its fifth year as a separate international keelboat series. The regatta retains the "down island" warmth of the island's yacht racing history that goes back to the first Round Grenada Race in 1968.

Grenada Sailing Week offers two different "playing fields" — one in the calmer waters off St. George's and Grand Anse in the island's lee, and one in the open-ocean conditions off the south coast. Taking advantage of both arenas, this year's event, with title sponsor Island Water World, raced around the buoys in the lee on Day One, from St. George's to the south coast on Day Two, and off the south coast on Days Three and Four.

The venerable Grenada Yacht Club clubhouse at St. George's Lagoon, opened in 1960 and recently expanded, hosted a boisterous pre-race Welcome Party and Race Day One's Red Cap Party. Then the action moved to Secret Harbour Marina in Mount Hartman Bay, where the newly remodeled open-air marina restaurant, with its pizza oven and friendly staff, proved a popular gathering place and venue for the subsequent daily prizegivings and a fun Pirate Party. Secret Harbour's hilltop restaurant overlooking the bay was a fitting summit for the final prizegiving, as well as a Lay Day barbecue and well-attended showing of the film "Vanishing Sail" about the indigenous craft of Grenada's sister isle, Carriacou.

## The Races

Race Day One, sponsored by Mount Gay Rum, offered up conditions ranging from spicy to dicey in flat water with a small chop. Along with some "white-out" rainsqualls came breezes ranging from zero to 25 knots and gusting over 30. J/24 skipper Robbie Yearwood of the perennial podium placer *Die Hard* said, "The weather made for interesting racing; some boats do well in heavy air and others do well in light air. There was something for everyone!" Five protests after a day of fickle conditions gave the jury, headed by Harry Keith, a veteran of 20 regattas in Grenada, a workout.

Racing on Day Two, sponsored by Sea Hawk Paints, gave racers a taste of blue-water racing in steadier but brisk winds, sailing around Point Saline and up the south coast, contending with bigger waves ("a bit lumpy"), some current, shoals and awash offshore rocks.

Race Day Three, sponsored by Secret Harbour, provided more south coast fun, with half-metre waves and 25-knot winds. In Racing Class, Richard Szyjan's modified Hobie 33, *Category 5*, got T-boned at the start by a regular opponent who had been over the line early and was coming around to try again. Seriously damaged, *Category 5*, which had won Racing Class the two previous years and was looking for a hat trick, was forced to retire from the regatta. At the daily prizegiving, *Category 5* crewmember Kenzo Szyjan won a cheer from the crowd by taking the mic to say there were no hard feelings, and "that's yacht racing!"

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Marginally milder conditions on Race Day Four, sponsored by Pure Grenada, brought the regatta to a close. As on other days, the now well-established Classic Class added extra eye candy to the scene. The organizers are encouraging more classics to come, as Grenada now has abundant facilities to give them the TLC (or heaven forbid, the repairs) they need.

At the other end of the entry spectrum, Grenada Sailing Week is also hoping to encourage a Class 40 class. This year, the Class 40 *Campagne de France* sailed around the island on the Tuesday to establish a record for next year's Class 40 challenge, and looked fine marching around the buoys in a class of its own.

Also turning heads was Jason Fletcher's new Rodger Martin-designed Caribbean 33, built at Grenada Marine and launched only the night before the first race. "You know what the name is, right? *Nickatime!*" Jason says. His Albin Stratus, *Apero*, was last year's "Best Performing Yacht", and of *Nickatime*, he says, "Although we haven't got our new sails yet and sailed with borrowed ones, including a too-small spinnaker, we are pleased with the boat's performance. The idea was to create a Caribbean racing class boat, and it really has the potential to succeed."

After a total of ten races with one discard, *Dingo*, a winner in 2014, reclaimed Racing Class's top spot, and the Frers 43 *Jaguar*, first in her class in 2013 and 2014, rose to the head of Racer/Cruiser 1 after a tussle with the Dufour 44 *Piccolo*. It was no surprise that *Die Hard*, a class winner in all four previous Grenada Sailing Weeks, won her class once more, but it wasn't all bullets, thanks to the Elan 37, *Julie Rule*, which took Racer/Cruiser 2's second place, and the J/24 *Shakin*, which hung tightly to third. In Classic Class, the Alfred Mylne 65 *The Blue Peter*, a class winner in 2014 and 2016, had to give way to the 70-foot yawl *Galatea*.

Placing a solid third in Racing Class on *Taz*, Antigua's Bernie Evan-Wong says, "Grenada Sailing Week is one of my favorites. Once you start coming here, you'll keep coming. Good racing, very competitive, good wind, great place, good parties, great atmo-

a comfortable, fun regatta. You don't get all the big fancy boats or snobby professional jocks; it's real top-end amateur enthusiast crews rather than hired hands. It's authentic — a regatta for connoisseurs of the real Caribbean!"

Dates for Grenada Sailing Week 2018 are January 29th through February 3rd.

For more information on Grenada Sailing Week visit [www.grenadasailingweek.com](http://www.grenadasailingweek.com).

Premier Sponsors were Island Water World, Grenada Tourism Authority, Mount Gay Rum, Secret Harbour Marina, Sea Hawk Premium Yacht Finishes, Silentwind generators, The Moorings, Spice Island Marine Services, LIAT and Swiftpac. Supporting sponsors and service providers were Brydon & Minors, Doyle Sails, Dream Yacht Charters, Grenada Marine, Horizon Yachts Grenada, IGA Real Value Supermarket, The Connection, Turbulence Ltd., Palm Tree Marine, SOL, L'Anse Aux Epines Cottages, Coyaba resort, Goiya



Above: Ashore 'you meet your friends; have a laugh'.

Left to right: Photographer Tim Wright shares a joke with skippers Richard Szujan and Jason Fletcher.

Below: The happy *Taz* crew, with skipper Bernie Evan-Wong, third from left



sphere. I will keep coming as long as I can, and I encourage others to come."

Trinidadian Katrina Kelshall, crewing on the Soverel 42 *C-Mos*, and who races regionally on various boats, agrees: "Why do I keep coming back to Grenada? It's homespun, and I mean that in a good way. Grenada is

wine, Wine & More, Marine Tech Grenada, Island Dreams Yacht Services, Mod1 and CocoNet.

Thanks to the Grenada Sailing Week Board, the GSW committees and volunteers, and Secret Harbour Resort for making Compass's first-hand coverage of this event possible and enjoyable.

## GRENADA SAILING WEEK 2017 WINNERS

### Racing Class (12 boats)

- 1) *Dingo*, Ker 11.3, Mark Chapman, Trinidad (19 points)
- 2) *Whistler*, J/105, Peter Lewis, Barbados (27.5 points)
- 3) *Taz*, RP 37, Bernard Evan-Wong, Antigua (32.5 points)

### Racer/Cruiser Class 1 (7 boats)

- 1) *Jaguar*, Frers 43, Peter Morris, Trinidad (15 points)
- 2) *Piccolo*, Dufour 44, Andrew Yates, UK (16 points)
- 3) *Bluefin*, Beneteau 456, Curtis Farley, USA (22 points)

### Racer/Cruiser Class 2 (6 boats)

- 1) *Die Hard*, J/24, Robbie Yearwood, Grenada (11 points)
- 2) *Julie Rule*, Elan 37, Peter "Champy" Evans, Grenada (15 points)
- 3) *Shakin*, J/24, Gus Reader, Barbados (22 points)

### Classic Class (3 boats)

- 1) *Galatea*, 70-foot yawl, Judd Tinius, St. Croix (5 points)
- 2) *The Blue Peter*, Alfred Mylne 65, Mathew Barker, UK (6 points)
- 3) *Savvy*, Petite Martinique Sloop 43, Danny Donelan, Grenada (12 points)

### Cruising Class (2 boats)

- 1) *Shangri La*, Morgan 41, Jonathan Gittens, Barbados (6 points)
- 2) *After Hours*, Hunter 33, Alfred McMillan, Trinidad (12 points)

## Grenada's First 'Clean Regatta'

Shelley Brown and Robyn Albritton came to Grenada Sailing Week 2017 to help the event become more environmentally sustainable. They represent Sailors for the Sea, an ocean conservation group focusing on boaters.

Grenada Sailing Week is Grenada's first "Clean Regatta" in Sailors for the Sea's Clean Regattas program, which awards sustainability certification on various levels based on 25 best practices. Grenada Sailing Week is currently working toward Bronze Level certification, which means engaging in at least seven Clean Regattas best practices.

Shelley and Robyn tell *Compass*, "Grenada Sailing Week is so friendly and everyone's been so welcoming; we're glad to be participating." They describe their goal as "empowering boaters to become leaders in marine environmental protection — to be voices for the ocean."

Much remains to be done, especially in reducing plastic waste. The finish line hasn't been reached, but in becoming Grenada's first Clean Regatta the starting line has been crossed.

Visit [sailorsforthesea.org](http://sailorsforthesea.org) for more information on Sailors for the Sea, the Clean Regattas program and a downloadable Green Boating Guide.



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