

Antigua Sailing Week 2017 Affords Youth Development

Youth2Adult — Y2A — is a series of articles celebrating sailing's role in youth development for Caribbean children.

Fraito Lugo of Puerto Rico, who was featured in last November's Y2A column, made it big in May at Antigua Sailing Week (ASW). The weeklong event was also a triumph for teen youth development during top-notch racing. Garth Steyn traveled from St. Maarten with

secure a position in the final with a race to spare. Helmed by Olympic medalist Ossie Stewart, *Scarlet Oyster* lagged behind *R-Six*, skippered by Poland's Robert Janeki. By the three-race final, four teams, all from different countries — *Rebel* (Antigua), *R-Six* (Poland), *Sojana* (Great Britain) and *Dingo* (Trinidad) — duked it out for first-prize honors.

Rhone's *Rebel* team, including Antiguan teenagers Angeline Gordon and Jahread Jeffrys, took second

Antigua's next Olympic sailor, in 2020. Currently the Antigua Laser Champion, he's also done great things internationally. Definitely one to watch!"

Regarding Rhone Kirby's recent accomplishment, fellow Antiguan Omari Scott (currently Optimist Race Coach, Coral Reef Yacht Club in Miami, Florida) says, "I know Rhone very well. Rhone reminds me a lot of myself: a local guy with loads of talent who is completely dedicated to making a career for himself in the world of sailing. We are not as fortunate in the Caribbean with the finances to train and explore the world of sailing as much as we should or would like to, but there are ways to make it happen. I have been through all the hoops to get to where I am as the head coach at Coral Reef Yacht Club and a coach for the United States Optimist Sailing Team. Rhone is cur-



Young Antiguan skipper Rhone Kirby and his teen crew took second place overall at the Nonsuch Bay RS Elite Challenge 2017, held on ASW's lay day, racing against competition that included teams from regional podium regulars Lazy Dog, Scarlet Oyster, Dingo and Sojana



youth from Kidz at Sea, an organization he founded to introduce children to sailing and to nurture youth toward marine vocations.

In CSA 4 Class, a field of 13 boats ranging from J/120s to Sergio Sagramoso's Melges 32 *Lazy Dog*, which Fraito Lugo helmed, competed in Antigua's vast ocean course. With four firsts, and a sixth as their worst race, Fraito's team handily took first overall in the class.

Meanwhile, ASW's Lay Day event spotlighted an up-and-coming young Antiguan sailor — Rhone Kirby. Paraphrasing from Antigua Sailing Week's report: "After a tremendous Damian Marley experience at Reggae in the Park in Nelson's Dockyard, English Harbour, midway through Antigua's weeklong annual sailing event, eight teams from several nations raced in ASW's fifth edition of the Nonsuch Bay RS Elite Challenge."

In the first heat, two teams with perfect score-lines at ASW, *Scarlet Oyster* and *R-Six*, took on the young Antiguan crew aboard *Rebel* and Puerto Ricans racing *Lazy Dog*. After two races, the young all-Antiguan team skippered by Rhone Kirby was in the driver's seat. He showed expert boat-handling upwind to

overall. *Sojana* took first and *R-Six* third.

Kathy Lammers, current Caribbean Sailing Association president, says, "Rhone and his team did really well, finishing second overall. We're really proud of them. Rhone won the Nonsuch Bay RS Elite Summer Series final and, thus, won the top of two spots for Antiguan teams in the RS Elite Challenge on Lay Day. The second-place winner of the Summer Series Final was their fellow Antiguan Bernie Evan-Wong, who succumbed to Rhone Kirby's excellent sailing in the Lay Day event."

Continuing to paraphrase from ASW: "Jules Mitchell (18 years old) and his all-youth team of 18- and 19-year-olds finished second in CSA 6 Class. Garth Steyn of the Kidz at Sea program in St. Maarten came with his boat *Moondance* and took out many Antiguan youth sailors from the National Sailing Academy — different youngsters on each day of racing. They had a great time and learned plenty."

Kathy Lammers additionally commented, "Jules Mitchell is a young sailor we have our eyes on in Antigua right now. He is working toward becoming

rently going through these hoops and it will all pay off for him. I'm happy to see another young talented local sailor do big things for his country, himself and his family. Rhone is a good friend and very dedicated to the sport of sailing. I wish him nothing but the best."

Stay tuned for more reports about Caribbean youth development through junior sailing. In the meantime, support youth learn-to-sail programs and competitive sailing in Caribbean islands large and small. The quality of life in the Caribbean depends on today's youth getting the support, tools and training to be tomorrow's leaders and conservationists.

Ellen Birrell attributes her opportunity to cruise the Caribbean aboard S/V Boldly Go to life skills built in childhood. Believing swimming and sailing are essentials for island youth, she supports grass roots and competitive junior sailing, and serves as chair of sailing development for Caribbean Sailing Association.

If you know of a Caribbean youth sailor or adult to put forward as a Y2A feature candidate, please contact ellenbirrell@gmail.com.

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