

Barnegat Light Snags Second in NJ State Lifeguard Tourney

The Barnegat Light Beach Patrol is hot on the trail of first place.

Last year's Long Beach Island Beach Patrol Association Lifeguard Tournament winner has claimed a number of second-place finishes this summer – the most recent at Monday's 22nd annual New Jersey State Lifeguard Championships, held each year in Ship Bottom – and is primed for the upcoming, always-competitive Islands contest.

Heading into this week's Ship Bottom Invitational, the BLBP had previously claimed silver at both the Surf City Epic and a recent tournament in Lavallette, which Nate Humberston, team captain for the local invitational, called "a really tough race" – a description he also applied to the state tourney.

Barnegat Light, host Ship Bottom and Long Beach Township represented LBI at the Monday evening competition, which, as former beach patrol chief and race coordinator Walt Domanski explained, "always features the top lifeguard patrols from Sandy Hook to Cape May County."

A number of the participating teams have won, or placed in the top three, in regional races along the New Jersey coast in 2009 and 2010, and were ready to "fight it out for bragging rights," said Domanski, who co-founded the tournament in 1989, along with Dennis Rose.

A crowd of approximately 400 spectators, Domanski remarked after the event, was "treated to a great show of lifeguarding ability as the competitors rowed, paddled, swam and ran in the eight races, which showcase the daily duties of New Jersey lifeguards."

At evening's end, Cape May County champion patrol Ocean City secured first place with 44 points.

Barnegat Light accumulated 33 points, followed by Brigantine, with 27 points.

Sea Girt grabbed fourth place with 16 points, while Ship Bottom and Sandy Hook tied for fifth with 15 points each.

Long Beach Township was close behind, with 14 points, and Bradley Beach and Island Beach State Park rounded out the rest of the competitors.

"We were really happy with second, competing against powerhouses like Ocean City, Brigantine and Sandy Hook," Humberston commented after the race. "Everyone was really excited tonight."

"It's nice to compete at that level. ... We like to get those chances to go against the big guys."

"It's a championship-caliber event," Domanski emphasized following the tournament, as he and Michelle Ciasca, Lifeguard in Training director for the SBBP, stood on the 23rd Street beach while the squads packed up their gear.

"It was an excellent, very competitive race that ran very smoothly," Ciasca determined. "Everyone seemed to have a good time, and that's what

it's all about."

Ciasca believes that Barnegat Light will be tough to beat in the upcoming annual LBIBPA tournament, in which every Island patrol competes.

Despite the BLBP's small size – less than 40 guards – Humberston said, "We have a lot of depth," with many quality swimmers as well as solid paddlers and rowers, which has historically helped the team excel in tournaments.

"Everyone is really close and that really helps in races. ... It's a cohesive environment."

Looking ahead to Islands, Humberston noted, "That will be a full team effort. We feel good right now ... but you never want to be overconfident, because it's a race in the ocean, and you never know what can happen."

He expects that the Surf City patrol, which won the Epic contest this summer, and took first in Islands in 2007 and 2008, will come out strong.

The 49th annual LBIBPA Lifeguard Tournament will be held on Friday and Saturday, Aug. 6 and 7, at 6 p.m. The location is yet to be determined.

And the Winners Are ...

Race results from the Ship Bottom Beach Patrol Invitational NJ State Lifeguard Championships are as follows:

Iron Person Medley:

Ocean City, first; Brigantine, second; Barnegat Light, third; Sandy Hook, fourth; Sea Girt, fifth; Ship Bottom, sixth

Men's 1,500 ft. Paddle:

Barnegat Light, first; Ship Bottom, second; Ocean City, third; Brigantine, fourth; Long Beach Township, fifth; Sea Girt, sixth

Women's 1,500 ft. Paddle:

Barnegat Light, first; Ocean City, second; Ship Bottom, third; Long Beach Township, fourth; Bradley Beach, fifth; Sea Girt, sixth

Buoy Rescue:

Ocean City, first; Barnegat Light, second; Sea Girt, third; Brigantine, fourth; Long Beach Township, fifth; Sandy Hook, sixth

Boat Swim:

Ocean City, first; Long Beach Township, second; Sandy Hook, third; Sea Girt, fourth; Brigantine, fifth; Barnegat Light, sixth

Paddle Relay:

Ocean City, first; Ship Bottom, second; Barnegat Light, third; Brigantine, fourth; Sandy Hook, fifth; Long Beach Township, sixth

Walt Domanski Sr. Memorial 1,000 ft. Doubles Row:

Brigantine, first; Ocean City, second; Barnegat Light, third; Bradley Beach, fourth; Sea Girt, fifth; Long Beach Township, sixth

Run Relay:

Bradley Beach, first; Sandy Hook, second; Brigantine, third; Sea Girt, fourth; Ocean City, fifth; Barnegat Light, sixth

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Photographs by Jack Reynolds

WET AND WILD: (From top) Jonny Skolnick of the Ship Bottom Beach Patrol propels his board toward the beach during the 1,500-foot Paddle event at the 22nd annual New Jersey State Lifeguard Championships, hosted by Ship Bottom. Barnegat Light's Nate Humberston exits the water to take first in the Paddle, followed by Skolnick, in second place. Members of the Barnegat Light squad launch their rowers into the shorebreak during the Iron Person Medley, in which the patrol took third, helping it to earn second overall in the tournament, held Monday.