

WAVEBLASTERS CLUB VISIT

RICK EYRICH VISITS A NEW CIRCLE OF MODEL BOATERS



ABOVE: Once you arrive for a normal meeting of the Waveblasters club it won't be long before you'll see a host of scale hulls like this large tugboat situated along the shoreline of the group's large park side lake. Using a split day programme the scale/sail portion of the group run in the morning hours after which the fast electric boaters within the club run and race their vessels during the afternoon hours

ABOVE: Due to some high winds present during my visit some of the club's larger scale boats were seen running at a bit of an angle; but this didn't deter any of the members from sailing their replica marine craft. With the large size of the park lake used by the group it's possible for the model boaters to actually launch two different hulls and switch off their run duties amongst the boats steaming around the pond

Like many of today's PC-friendly model boaters your MMI scribe will sometimes take the time to check the Internet for any potentially new club activity close to home. In the last few months references to a new model marine group called the Waveblasters began to show up on several scale and fast electric websites; so, the idea of visiting this Florida based boat club began to form in my mind. Following a short series of emails between myself, and the south Florida based group the date was set and with that we'll now give you a full overview of this new circle of model boaters.

Club locale: Again, I was able to use the Waveblasters website to easily navigate my way to the club's lake site which was located in the east coast Florida township of Fort Pierce. Situated within the city's Palm Lake Park, the club's area within the site is made up of a tree lined parking area that's anchored by a large covered/paved picnic area and this space is the group's focal point for each Sunday's gatherings. The pond itself is more than massive enough for any scale, sail or fast electric marine craft; plus, the club itself has added a full set of buoys laid-out in a suitable oval course for FE racing by anyone in the organisation.

Although there was a noticeable level of grass like vegetation present along the lake's shoreline there was no serious indication that the grass was either a deepwater problem or causing a lot of grief around the props and rudders found on the club member's various R/C marine craft. Located only a couple of miles from a major highway the Waveblasters run site is easily accessible from any point in Florida and as such anyone visiting the state's various popular vacation spots could set-up a visit to this model boat club.

MMI Visit Data

When the date arrived for your MMI writer's meeting with the Waveblasters the usual gentle Florida Winter weather would be greatly altered by Mother Nature! Due to the passage of a, rather windy and wet cold front the Sunday forecast for Palm Lake Park turned out to be bleak; however, these gloomy conditions did little to diminish the reception I received upon my early morning arrival at the club's pond. Unlike many R/C boat groups the Waveblasters conduct their regular meetings in what you might call a 'split session', in that the scale and sail enthusiasts run their vessels in the morning hours after which the fast electric devotees



ABOVE: A lot of highly detailed scale vessels were present in the group's scale boat ranks and this tug was one of several good looking working ships running out on the lake. With their recent alliance with the US based Scale Ship Modellers Association of North America this group is looking forward to holding their own regatta to help establish an even stronger scale marine craft presence in their area of the US

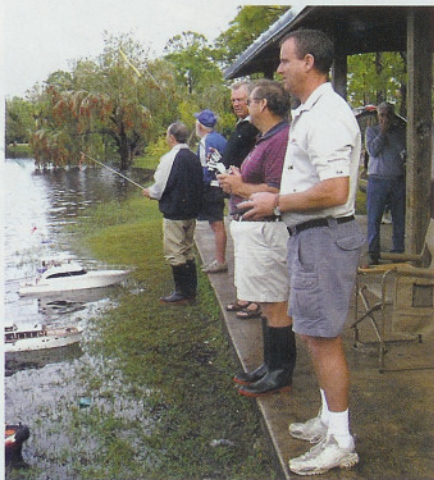
then set-up shop in and around the park's waterside pavilion to pilot their marine craft.

Within an hour of checking in with the first boaters present at the lake the entire covered picnic kiosk was filled with all kinds of scale model craft and even though the lake's surface had a fairly serious chop it wasn't long before a large group of scale hulls were under power on the pond.

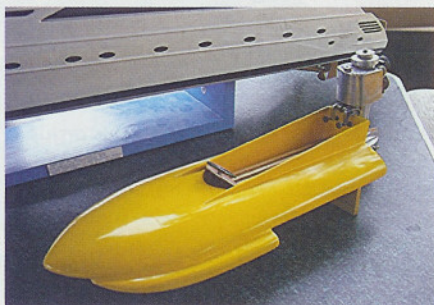
Since many of the scale enthusiasts were



ABOVE: With a large covered space equipped with a series of steel picnic tables the Waveblasters have a good set-up to support whatever size scale or fast electric boat they might like to run at a normal meeting date. A regular mix of working, military and pleasure craft were noted and there was also a bunch of semi-built project boats being talked about as well during the course of the scale member's morning session



ABOVE: A large amount of recent rainfall had moved the shoreline within a step or two of the pavilion located inside Palm Lake Park, which is the club's designated meeting site. With about forty active members the Waveblasters can quickly fill up the covered picnic space with either scale/sail or fast electric boats depending on the time of day!



ABOVE: Along with the obvious model craft types you'd expect to find at a model marine craft club outing there were several more unique hulls present at the Waveblasters gathering. This replica of an early knell down racing hydroplane stood out amongst the various designs and it even had an equally scale outboard motor unit attached to its transom

long time modellers their boat choices included a wide array of working, military and pleasure craft style vessels; plus, there was also a handful of more unique boats in this mix as well. Along with the tugboats, fishing craft, Coast Guard cutters, PT boats and warships you could also checkout such things as a R/C duck and a couple of homemade 'pop bottle' vessels that were always ready for action out on the water. In touring the shoreline it was not unusual to hear a couple of club members exchanging some information regarding a recent modification to a certain project hull or, in another moment hear what was needed to update an older scale boat to the new 2.4 GHz radio systems.

Due again to the large size of the park's



ABOVE: One factor that really stood out in my initial exposure to this club was how current its online website was kept with updates shown on it every few days. Shown here by his scale paddle wheeler is Bud Johanson and Bud does an excellent job of keeping any viewer of the club's website well informed and able to pick out a suitable day to visit this south Florida model boat organisation

lake it was common practice to see a Waveblaster launch one scale boat, give a good run around and then position it to drift in the mid pond regions. At this juncture the same modeller would then situate another/different replica marine craft on the water and make a pass or two along the shoreline. Without question this course of action will demand a serious radio frequency monitoring system; however, I witnessed no control issues with some of the scale group running two separate hulls at the same time.

As for the future hopes for the scale side of the Waveblasters organisation I was informed that the club had just aligned itself with the US based Scale Ship Modeller's Association of North America. This move will enable the south Florida group to both learn more about all aspects of scale model craft; plus, they will also like to apply for a regatta date in the SSMA in the future to establish the best scale modelling group possible in their area of the US. Already deep in both the numbers of enthusiasts and marine craft devoted to scale boating this segment of the Waveblasters greatly impressed your scribe and I look forward



ABOVE: In watching the various scale marine craft sail around the pond site I couldn't detect any heavy duty aquatic vegetation in the water; so, any R/C scale, sail or FE hull can be easily run on the Waveblasters water. Regular prop drives, thrusters and even air-driven systems could be found on the member's hulls and this large CG cutter's deep vee design had no problems navigating the shoreline of the park lake



ABOVE: Using mostly spares box odds and ends and a pair of medium sized soda bottles for floatation this 'airboat' was a big hit with many of the spectators checking out the club's assembled model craft. Having fun with this kind of vessel is commonplace with the group and this theme runs through all of the activities held over the course of an average club meeting

to monitoring their progress in the coming years. However, this is only the first half of our visit to this multi-interest model marine club, as it's now time to turn our sights towards the fast electric side of the group which again has developed quickly in the relatively short period of time that the majority of its followers have been running their FE boats.

On a side note I did have some previous first hand experience with this branch of the club as I'd met some of the 'fast electric Waveblasters' during an earlier 2007 speed trails/SAWS held only a few hour's drive north of their Fort Pierce, Florida location. Running the latest in brushless motors and LiPo batteries in their FE hulls the Waveblasters at the event achieved some record speeds; so, some of these club members had already gained some major FE boat knowledge before I made my 2008 trip to their home pond. In checking out the assembled power craft at the group's waterside location I noted that there was a lot of the Hobbico/Aquacraft SuperVee 27



ABOVE/BELOW: No matter what your interest in scale boats is it's likely that you'll find something to your liking at a Waveblasters lake day. Everything from a classic cabin cruiser to a present day warship were run in the morning hours and you could also find such things as a submarine present in the pit area as well



mono hulls in the mix as this popular RTR fast electric marine craft is actually raced by the club throughout the bulk of the year. Run in both stock and modified forms the SV27's run on the before mentioned, oval course and the normal club schedule relies on a heat/last chance/main event format to align the competitors on each race day. As for the Aquacraft brushless motored hulls themselves, their racing regulations are limited by the club in both classes to keep the racing easily within the reach of the average model boater in that area of Florida.

Modifications allowed in the stock SV27 division involve updating such things as the flex shaft, motor cooling jacket and some basic tweaks within the mono hull's inner makeup; but, the stock composite propeller, steel trim tabs and other transom hardware on the vessel must remain stock on the pre built FE boat. These same guidelines, with some exceptions, are also followed in the separate modified SV27 class; yet, the racer does have the option of using an aftermarket metal propeller and/or a set of accessory/adjustable trim tabs on their hulls to help improve the marine craft's performance/speed levels. Interesting enough LiPo batteries are allowed in both classes which indicate that these cells are quickly becoming the power source of choice for most fast electric racing boats here in the US. In watching both styles of the SuperVee 27 running out on the oval course it was apparent that the Waveblasters had an excellent working knowledge of their marine craft as all of the fiberglass mono hulls were capable of speeds in the high-30/low-40 mph range while running in a straight line.

Another interesting fact about the fast electric side of the group was their age range as it was not unusual to see a pre-



ABOVE: Shown here gathered together at the close of their run period the scale side of the 'Blasters smile for the MMI camera lens. Always quick with a smile these modellers had a lot of fun running their boats and are always ready to discuss their marine craft with anyone who comes out to one of the club's regular outings

teen racing directly alongside someone old enough to be his/her grandfather. By using a well thought out race programme all of the competitors were able to get in some good on water time and judging from their faces everyone was enjoying themselves even with the choppy water conditions they had to deal with during their races.

The use of a recovery boat kept the race programme moving well at all times and to establish the start of each event a pre-recorded time loop was broadcast throughout the whole pit area to inform the club members when their next heat race was scheduled to start. Not unlike the scale side of the club's recent alliance with the SSMA, the Waveblasters have also joined-up with the North American Model Boat Association (NAMBA) and this connection will allow them to consider having a sanctioned fast electric event should that be a goal of the entire club membership.



ABOVE: With both a scale German patrol boat and a converted I/C cat hull running a brushless motor set-up you can tell that some of the club's membership run both halves of a typical meeting at the lake. This crossover effect gives the south Florida group an excellent base of model boating knowledge and will allow any new/novice modellers to quickly begin their introduction into the hobby



ABOVE: Another benefit of attending a Waveblasters outing is that you might end up learning a lot of useful information that you can apply to almost any model marine craft in your fleet of hulls. Shown here on the left is Don Wollard who gave an in-depth talk on fast electric propeller modifications and the entire group came away with some new ideas on the proper cleanup, balancing and tweaking of an average FE metal propeller



ABOVE: Like any club the Waveblasters use a wide variety of radio transmitters and this will demand a serious frequency clip arrangement to prevent control problems. Throughout my visit none of the scale or fast electric boaters had any radio glitches; so, this model boat group can handle a large array of radios and boats without any worries of a frequency conflict problem



ABOVE: Besides the SuperVee 27 hulls there was an equal amount of other FE marine craft present in the club's staging area and some of these boats have seen action at several SAWS and oval races held in the last two years. Now aligned with the US organisation NAMBA the 'Blasters' will continue to involve themselves in all aspects of FE competition at their lake and at national events

Special Visit Notes

Along with all of their regular meeting activities the Waveblasters also had an additional point of interest on the day that I visited their area. Long time and well known fast electric enthusiast Don Wollard was on hand in Fort Pierce and his appearance was much anticipated by the FE crowd as this fellow Florida resident was scheduled to give a talk on the ins and outs of modifying

fast electric boat propellers. Working with his own large collection of props, balancers and tools Don carefully detailed how to shape almost any metal propeller into shape and he also took questions from the group regarding how to apply these techniques to their blades and hulls. Don Wollard also contributed some items for the Waveblasters regular 50/50 raffle; so, the whole day at the lake was a win-win situation for everyone gathered at the park. This kind of activity shows that this model boat club is out to have fun, and this theme was very obvious throughout my visit to this growing scale/sail/fast electric boat organisation.

Another important factor in how well this group works likely stems from their online website as it's kept updated at all times and this includes such things as weekly meeting notes, upcoming events and all of the current standings in each of the SV27 racing divisions. Altogether, these various

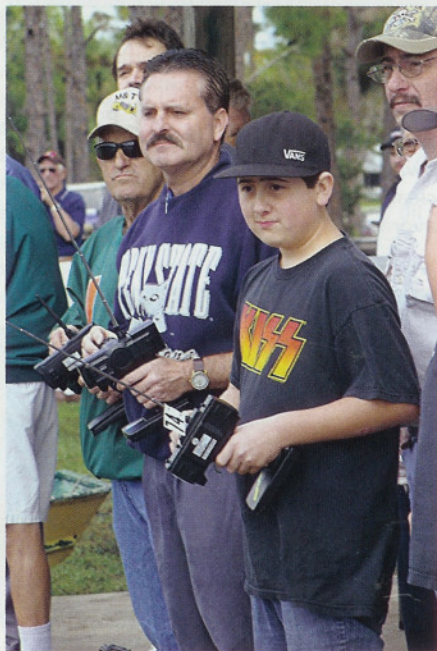


ABOVE: Seen here checking out a new all wood FE outrigger hull is Mike Martin who also ran the SV27 racing programme during my visit to the club. Like all of the group's appointed officers Mike's duties have helped build the club's membership levels to the forty-plus level and this number should continue to grow due to their hard work during each meeting

elements make for the ultimate model boating experience and the Waveblasters always look forward to greeting anyone new to the hobby and sharing their fun with new people.

Final Thought

Even though Mother Nature didn't cooperate very well during my trip to the south Florida model boat group I had a thoroughly enjoyable experience during my time with the Waveblasters. I want to thank the entire club for their help and support with this article and I look forward to both seeing them at upcoming scale/fast electric events and when they begin to hold their own regattas in the future. ■



ABOVE: In watching the group's two FE divisions in action it was not unusual to see a big gap in the ages of the competitors and with a good percentage of young members it's likely that this US based club will help keep the model boating activity going strong well into the future



ABOVE: Running on a permanent oval course layout the SuperVee 27 boats are quick enough to impress everyone watching them compete out on the lake used by the club. Allowed to use either NiMH or LiPo batteries these hulls can take a lot of punishment and this can be an important factor for any model boat group running a 'spec' FE marine craft class