

Sailing club provides for leisurely competition

S. Scott Rosenberg

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As they circled Lake Sainte Louise on Sunday, Josh Buell and Kris Oman shared lyrics from songs by the Beatles.

Although in competition in the Lake Saint Louis Sailing Club's Regatta, the laid-back nature of the races afforded to indulge in a celebration of Paul McCartney's recent 64th birthday.

"We were having a Beatles sing-along," Buell said. "I want to beat Kris. It's not very competitive where I'll go home and be disappointed if he beats me ... We're just having fun."

Buell, who is headed to Denison College in Ohio in the fall, won the four Sunfish sailboat races Sunday, but Oman was close behind in three of them. The two were racing in the club's monthly regatta.

"I try to beat him, but it doesn't usually work," Oman said.

Given Oman is the closest member of the club to Buell in terms of age, they naturally began competing when Oman and his family moved to Lake Saint Louis a couple years ago. Oman's sister, Kelly, also participated in the regatta, which included seven boats.

The course included three buoys in a triangular formation, calling for the racers to circle them on their starboard side. After passing the first two, they had to pass an imaginary line between the third buoy and a committee boat.

From the committee boat, older members of the sailing club, including Pearson Buell, served as the regatta's administrators, rule keepers and coaches.

In addition to the regattas, the sailing club also offers lessons. In the three-hour lessons, they spend the first half-hour informing the kids how to race, but those kids learn the ropes during their time on the water. At the end of the three hours, Josh Buell said they have a handle on how to do it.

"Knowing what you're doing isn't hard and knowing how to get from one buoy to another," he said. "It's how to do it fast. I'm certainly not the best at that."

That honor might go to his father, Pearson, who Josh said he has never beaten in a regatta. Pearson raced on Lake Michigan when he was younger and has visited there with Josh. Although Josh is headed to college in Ohio, he said he would eventually enjoy living near Lake Michigan or another body of water to continue racing.

The Sunfish sailboat is a 13-foot-10 boat with a 75 -square-foot sail. Yet, before they moved from Seattle, the Omans sailed in bigger boats; consequently, it called for them to become accustomed to a different type of sailing.

"We didn't like the boats at first because they were slow," Kelly Oman said.

Two weekends ago, the Omans and Buell traveled to the Junior Olympic Sailing Festival in Springfield, Mo. Buell was second this year after placing sixth last year. The Omans also had a strong overall finish.