

Pitching clamshells a local tradition America

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — One of this historic seashore resort's grand traditions continued while the sun was still shining and wind was calm before the storm.

The Rich Reinhart Junior Clamshell Pitching Tournament was held Sept. 2 on Windsor Avenue beach. The tournament was open to boys and girls in two categories, ages 6 to 11 and 12 to 17. This year's tournament was dominated by children in the younger category. The tournament's namesake was the former president and founder of the International Clamshell Pitching Club of Cape May. His daughter, Stephanie Stevens, has carried on the tradition, running this year's tournament.

The beach was roped off into playing areas. Each player tosses a clamshell toward a small hole dug in the sand. Younger players were aiming for a hole 15 feet away, while older competitors aimed for a hole 25 feet away. A shell landing near a hole scored one point while a shell dropping into a hole scored two points.

Shells were provided or players brought their own lucky shell. A table full of trophies awaited the participants.

Stevens instructed the participants of the rules while many clacked their clamshells together, producing a sound like muted wind chimes. She warned the players of the fragility of the shells.

The contest was very similar to pitching horseshoes in scoring and play, Stevens said.

The start of the tournament featured a singles competition. The children later teamed up as doubles partners with their competitor from the singles round.

Parents and recreation department aides helped the youngsters get started,



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

A boy pitches a clamshell during the Rich Reinhart Junior Clamshell Pitching Tournament on Sept. 2 at Windsor Avenue beach in Cape May.

and many seemed to master the sport after only a few minutes of play.

Denise Reinhart, wife of the event's founder, said the clamshell-pitching tournament in Cape May started in 1946, always on the weekend before Labor Day. The tournament at one time ran three days, with children playing on Friday and adults playing Saturday and Sunday. The tournament waned a bit in popularity in part due to a shrinking beach.

"My husband continued to do it for the children on the Friday before Labor Day to give them some traditional Cape May memories," Reinhart said.

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Cup vessel — the one that started it all — was electrifying," said Carolinn Pocher-Woody of Cape May. "My dad was an open-ocean racer from way back. He sailed the transAtlantic race in 1960. The best part of the trip for me was seeing his enjoyment in being back on the water."

America's history also includes a stint in the Civil War as a Confederate ship used to outrun Union Army blockades. The Confederate Army sank the America in the St. John River during the battle of Jacksonville. The Union Army later salvaged her and added cannons to her for the duration of the war.

The original America was destroyed during World War II. The near-perfect replica built in 1995 at a cost of more than \$6 million with a draft of 11.5-feet barely made it through the channel of Cape May Harbor.

America was hosted by the Corinthian Yacht Club of Cape May and docked at South Jersey Marina in Lower Township. Visitors



John Cooke/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

The America replica sets sail after spending two days in Cape May Harbor. Its next stop is Philadelphia and then on to Chesapeake Bay with a stop in Chestertown, Md.

boarded the yacht for free stay and afternoon sails and sunset sails were ticketed events.

Philadelphia was next on America's itinerary and then on to the Chesapeake Bay with a stop in Chestertown, Md.

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10th annual Mutt Strut on Sept. 17 in Cape May

CAPE MAY — Dogs and their owners are invited to stroll Cape May's beachfront Promenade Saturday, Sept. 17, during the 10th annual Mutt Strut.

Owners can walk their dogs on the Promenade anytime between 8 a.m. and noon for a requested donation of \$1 per leg (\$2 per person, \$4 per dog). Registration is required and is held near Convention Hall at Beach Avenue near Gurney Street. The rain date is Sunday, Sep. 18.

Adding to the enjoyment are dog trick and dog costume contests with prizes, an auction and dog information.

The event sponsor, Cape May County Dog Obedience Training Club (CMCDOTC), an AKC-affiliated club, has held local training classes for more than 30 years. Part of the event proceeds help the group's training classes and canine community outreach activities. Walkers also support a worthwhile cause, with part of the proceeds to go to Wings of Rescue, which transports dogs from high intake shelters to no-kill shelters for adoption.

The Mutt Strut is held as part of the American Kennel Club Responsible Dog Ownership Days. According to the AKC, this nationwide initiative "educates the public about the importance of being a responsible dog owner and celebrates the deep bond between humans and their canine companions."

Only dogs registered for the Mutt Strut are allowed on the Promenade on Sept. 17 and only between 8 a.m. and noon. Cape May regulations require dogs to be on a leash not more than 6 feet long; dogs are not allowed on the beach and owners must clean up after their pets. All dogs must have current rabies vaccinations. Females in heat, young puppies and aggressive dogs will all be more comfortable at home.

For more information on the Mutt Strut or dog training classes, email cmcdotc@comcast.net, visit cmcdotc.com, Facebook or wingsofrescue.org.

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