

DECISION wins at Key West

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KEY WEST (www.premiere-racing.com) - "This is the best feeling I've ever had after a regatta. We've been coming West since 1998 and winning here has long been on our list of goals," said Stephen Murray, skipper of High Performance Class champion Decision. "To me, this is the premier event in North America. Of all the regattas we've won over the years, this one stands out because of the history and tradition. It means a lot to be able to say you won Key West."

Decision captured the High Performance Class following a tremendous battle with sister ship Spookie.

Those two Carkeek 40-footers dominated the nine-boat class from start to finish with Spookie leading after the first two days of racing and Decision leading for the final three.

The regatta turned when Spookie, skippered by North Sails professional Steve Benjamin, blew out spinnakers in both races on Wednesday and suffered results of third and eighth. Decision was more consistent and wound up placing first or second in nine of 10 races. Johnny Lovell served as tactician for fellow New Orleans resident Murray, who took the helm after his father got injured on the second day of the regatta.

Stephen Murray, Jr. hoists the KWRW trophy, surrounded by the DECISION crew.

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"It was unbelievably exciting to sail against someone of Benjamin's caliber, someone I admire and respect so much," Murray said. "I couldn't have scripted this any better if I tried. To win the regatta on the last leg of the last race was really amazing."

Murray said the Decision program couldn't be done without the support of his father, who steered the boat on Monday and Tuesday. Murray reserved special praise for his wife Shelley, who allowed him to attend Key West despite the fact they are in the midst of building a house.

"A lot of credit goes to Johnny Lovell. He was a coach and mentor of mine while I was growing up and it's a huge help to have him onboard making great call after great call," Murray said.

Decision and Spookie finished with 19 and 20 points, respectively, while the third place boat in High Performance class had 44 points. That was Chessie Racing, skippered by George Collins (Miami Beach), which settled for victory in the Farr 400 One Design class.

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