

Long time coming

Surf City wins first LBIBPA title since 1980

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BRANT BEACH — For the past 17 years, the Barnegat Light and Long Beach Township beach patrols have owned the Long Beach Island Beach Patrol Association Lifeguard Tournament.

That trend finally was broken by Surf City Sunday.

"It's exciting," said long-time Surf City guard Rip Wagner, after he and Collette Pretre clinched the title for Surf City by winning the Mixed Doubles Row. "It's been a long time coming for Surf City. This is my 27th year, and I think the last time we won this tournament it might have been 28 years ago."

Wagner indeed was correct in his recollection. Surf City last won the island-wide lifeguard tourney back in 1980, when it successfully defended its only other championship from the year before.



"I've been here for 24 years," said Surf City captain Mark Dileo. "We've been close to winning this tournament on a couple of occasions, including last year, but have never been able to get by either Barnegat Light or Township."

Since 1980, the only other beach patrol to win the big tournament was Ship Bottom, which captured the tourney title a year later in 1981, won two straight in 1983 and 1984, and last won 18 years ago in 1989.

In every other year since 1980, the title has been won by either Barnegat Light or Long Beach Township, which has won all of its 14 championships since 1985.

Barnegat Light has won the tourney crown 13 times during the tournament's 46-year history. Ship Bottom has 10 titles, while Harvey Cedars and Barnegat Light State Park, which won the first three tournament titles from 1962 through 1964, each have three. Harvey Cedars won all three of its titles from 1972 through 1974.

Beach Haven has yet to win the island tournament.

"We added a couple of good competitors this year," said Dileo, whose squad won with 88 points, won seven events and was even disqualified during the Buoy Rescue. "Those competitors have made a big difference for us, and we felt it was our year."

Following Surf City, Barnegat Light, the defending champion going into this year's big event, swiped second place with 82 points, while Long Beach Township took third with 74 points. Ship Bottom was a close fourth with 70 points, while Beach Haven and Harvey Cedars finished fifth and sixth, respectively, with 39 and 27 points.

The Light took the lead with four events to go, when Doug Adams and Castiello pulled Brad Reeser through the Atlantic during the Line Pull, easily winning the event in 3:52.

"We were trying to make a comeback here, so we needed to come through," said Reeser, who reached the marker and was pulled halfway to the beach before the Long Beach Township and Surf City swimmers touched the marker buoy.

"When I was coming in, I was able to look to my right, and I saw a lot of people still swimming, so I knew we were good."

The Line Pull victory sent The Light into first with 68 points, just ahead of Surf City, which took third in the Line Pull, with 66, and eight points ahead of Township, which placed second in the Line Pull.

But a two-point lead wasn't a safe one, and while Barnegat Light's Don Adams took third in the Singles Row, and Bob and Krysten Selfridge finished fifth in the Mixed Doubles Row, Surf City received two big efforts from Steve Welc, Wagner and Pretre, as they regained the lead, this time for good.

Welc's victory in 2:19 sent Surf City back into a two-point lead with two events left, before Wagner and Pretre clinched the title with their first-place finish.

Wagner and Pretre got off to a great start, despite taking on a stiff southerly wind at the south end of the course. After turning the buoy marker first, Wagner and Pretre used a short-stroke method to cruise through the choppy ocean and row on to victory.

The trio of Hahn, Paul Dungee and Podolak finished off the team championship by placing second in the Surf Dash Relay behind the Barnegat Light crew of Polito, Loveless and Stauffer, who won the final event in 7:31.

"I knew it was going to be tooth and nail," Dileo said. "Barnegat Light is always near the top, and you can never count Township out of anything. And Ship Bottom always brings a tough team. But we won seven events tonight and received a total team effort. We're always strong the second night, and once we started having fun that's when we started winning."