



Testimonial
Michelle Warner and Reed Baldrige
2019 Charleston Race Week

Michelle: Doing the ritual of inspecting for bruises, after Charleston Race Week (CRW), I didn't even get to ten. The number of bruises doesn't reflect upon how much fun I've had, or how well we've done, it's more an indication of little things, like cleats, being in places that are bruise attractant. For example, the Melges 32 has these cleats, right where a bow person sits in heavy weather .. so many bruises will appear around the .. well you get the idea. But, on the VX One, even with one day of very heavy weather, and a couple of days that were intermittent, I didn't even get to ten. Makes me love the boat even more. But, let's start at the beginning.

Reed: After sailing with Michelle at the 2018 Lake Dillon Open, she reached out to me to see if I was interested in teaming up for Charleston race week. I said of course! I always love sailing in Charleston and have spent a reasonable amount of time there so I felt confident we could fanangle most of the pieces together to make it to the starting line. After some discussion about which boat, we finally decided on the VX One. Other boats that we looked at were the C&C30, Viper 640, J70, and Melges 24. Knowing that the 24 was out of our price and logistical ballpark, I looked into the VX and Viper.

I've been thinking about the VX One for a couple years now as the national fleet is growing strong and there was a large fleet assembling at Race week. I reached out to both Viper and VX owners and leaders to see what the options were. Luckily, we found a great setup logistically with a brand new boat that was to be delivered to Charleston before making it's way back home to TX. The boat owner, Rod Favela (Vela) assured me that the boat would be there with all of the bits and pieces that are needed to sail that week. Which is most definitely not typically the case with a new boat.

On the Tuesday of race week, when Rod and I showed up to put the boat together, it only took about half a day. Astonishment. Some things took a little adjusting but nothing that stopped us from splashing the boat that afternoon, due to the fact that the boat was really well put together, and I was impressed with some of the build tolerances.

I met up with Michelle and Austin Powers, fellow waszp sailor, on Tuesday night. It was the first time the three of us had met.

Michelle: I didn't realize until I arrived at CYC on Wednesday morning, that the boat was brand spanking new. There was still some sticky tape in places and our sails hadn't arrived yet; well, we had a spinnaker (Ullman) but not a main or jib. Once the sails arrived, we put the boat in the water, it didn't sink, and sailed it over to the resort area. This was my first time sailing since September as I don't sail when it's snowing. For me, there were many cobwebs to shake out; for Reed and Austin, absolutely none.

We picked up Austin at the dock and went for a sail. Our first hiccup was, you guessed it, the spinnaker. The very first hoist was ugly. The pull down rope tied correctly, but maybe not. So back to the dock to try something different. We went out again, and started sorting our spots when we tacked. I always seemed to get in Austin's way and Austin seemed to get smacked by the tiller extension a couple of times. Then went for the hoist. Again, we tied the pull down rope correctly ... but maybe not. Back to the dock.

Reed: After a day or two of practice we were feeling confident. The VX One sails much like other skiff boats but was much more manageable and stable. We started off racing conservatively and feeling out the fleet. There was a lot of learning by watching others around us, especially with things like where to have the jib track and how hot to sail downwind.

Michelle: As you can imagine, with two sail makers on the boat, the chatter around the sail shape was fascinating. Was there enough twist on the heady? Did the upper batten need to be tightened a little? How much vang to pull on? I learned so much by listening and looking at the sail shape. The best part is that they answered all of my questions, even the stupid ones. Friday was our first race, we lined up against 30ish boats and were off. We rounded the top mark, where boats were overtaking boats at the rounding, hoisted the kite and down wind we came. I was calling wind and sometimes I would just say, "puff on in 3,2,1, wheeeeeeeee". Yes, you can feel sorry for Austin and Reed, they heard that many times from me during CRW. When the wind is about 10-14 knots, and a 16-18 gust hits it, the boat just jumps and goes. You can feel the shift when it starts to plane. I kept looking at the kite and thinking that it wasn't that big and yet still, it really got the boat going.

At the end of the day, extremely happy with the racing, we came back to the dock, where the VXOne group was happy to answer our questions and talk about the day. Questions like, in which hole (there are eight or is it nine?) is the shackle to the clew plugged? How far up did you have your track during upwinds? Should the keel come up overnight? My biggest issue was that pulling the gyb on that last 1.5" was impossible for me, which led to the question: Is it possible, to add another purchase in there. Apparently, the class rules allow for that, but your gyb sheet has to be longer. I'd be interested to know if anyone is doing this. And yes – there was even a conversation around bruises. Everyone from the VXOne class was super friendly and answered our questions. I've sailed in other classes where that's not always the case. Second day, Friday – we're in second. Really? Wow! And the fleet was maybe a little bit more antsy, a bit more aggressive, and maybe a little bit hungover, because there were multiple general recalls, U flags, and I flags. Our first race, we went left, and oh, watched the entire fleet go by. We rounded the top mark second or third to last, put the kite up, Austin yelled at me to get out of the way, and wheeeee. We clawed our way back to 14th on that race. The next couple of races, we didn't go left, we stayed middle to right, and the crossings on the upwinds were close. Sometimes, I had to stand up to let the gyb out, from a hiking position it just didn't work that well, there's a lot of pressure on those cleats. The downwinds were always fun. The boat just goes so fast, I started to think that it felt like a cross between a laser, because of the upwind part, and a skiff... without the fall over and phttt of a skiff.

Reed: Saturday, A LOT of second places later, we were starting to feel more comfortable with the boat and were starting to put the boat in some pretty tight places, but don't tell Rod. In this fleet, all of the little wins make for big gains, such as a close cross or edging out someone on the downwind. Before the final day of racing we were close in points to Chris Alexander, who was on fire early in the series and we were just trying to decrease the delta between us. With some foul play on day 2 by Chris around a mark, they replaced numbers with letters for the drop race, which let us squeak into the top spot.

On Sunday, with big breeze we gave up some points in the first race and were now just behind Chris by 3. We decided not to go after him in the pre-start and just sail our race and put boats in-between us. In classic fashion, we were just behind Chris and his team going into the last bottom mark, with about 7 boats in front of us both. After some gentlemanly exchanges up the beat, we managed to get away and get some leverage, which put us in front of him at the top mark with one boat in between us. The breeze had piped up into the 20s for the last downwind. Opting for the "go faster" method, we sent it to the course left corner to get away from the top pack that were gybing to the inside halfway down the course. We had some space and sent it. As we got to the corner of the course, also known as the J/70 starting line, we gybed and were just over the lay line to the finish. Turns out that unlike many other boats that don't really accelerate when you either crack off up wind or heat it up a little downwind, the VX is not one of those boats. We were lit up on the layline coming in, main totally out, rocked up and ripping, flirting with 20kts boat speed and on our ear. I remember saying to Austin, "this is lining up for us, gotta go here!" Right as we came to the finish area, we crossed 3 boats and crossed the line. We looked back upwind after we got the kite down to see Greg Fisher finish just in front of Chris as they both shot the line. Sealing the win.

Michelle: Last day, the two races were extremely tactical. The wind kept shifting, building from either the right or the left. There was also some shear to it, and sometimes it seemed to bounce on the water. It was also very variable, with gusts over 20. It came down to the last race, we knew that we had to place ahead of Counterproductive in the last race to win. The start was great, but somehow, they always crossed in front of us on the upwind, and then started covering us, then one time, on the second upwind leg, they didn't .. and we were off. The downwind again was amazing. We were covering them until with the wind being consistent across the course, we went right, then gybed once and just took off. We stopped worrying about covering them and made up four boats after our gybe. We were hiking for all were worth, trying to keep the boat as flat as possible as Reed made Tudo Bem skim over the water. It's my most memorable ride. I felt like we just skipped over the water. I've sailed on skiffs and this had a similar feel, except for the burn of the hiking ... and no harnesses. There was no wheee .. no noise, except for "hike!". We hit 20 knots. On a 19 foot boat. It is a skiff. Our improvement item from Sunday. Do this again. Maybe in Australia? Now – I want one. I'm looking for someone to share a boat. Warning – it will have an Ullman spinnaker.

Reed: 10/10 recommend to anyone who used to sail dinghies, skiffs or want to have an absolute blast on the water for not much headache. It's a great size boat that encourages female sailing to make weight and it easy to put together or breakdown. Coming from someone

who has sailed almost all of the new one-design boats, this one has made the biggest step in the right direction for sailing.