

SOLO CHALLENGER

The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society



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Spring Edition 2026

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From the Helm — Ahoy Sailors!

As I sit at the helm, ready to sail from Puerto Rico back to Lake Superior, I feel the same excitement—and nerves—as my first solo Mac Challenge. Taking the helm of this organization brings that same thrill. I want to thank past president Russ Krock for his dedication, his vision, and his work expanding the opportunities we have to sail together—especially traditions like the Spring Scrambles in late May. As your new president, I'm committed

to honoring our history while keeping membership open to **anyone who loves solo sailing** and completes one of our challenges. If you'd like to help with the application process, or if you know someone interested in singlehanded sailing, please reach out to info@solosailors.org.

Why do we do the GLSS challenges? For the camaraderie. From veteran skippers to first-time challengers, we

share the triumphs, the lessons, and the stories. It's how we learn, grow, and keep sailing safer and faster together.

I look forward to seeing you at our events—on the water or swapping stories ashore. That connection is what keeps this group alive.

*Fair winds,
Brian VanWieren
President*

Currents — News and Other Scuttlebutt

Interested in a 900 to 1,000 NM Race on Lake Ontario?

Lake Ontario Offshore Racing ([LOOR](#)) of Port Credit Yacht Club is considering running a 900 to 1,000 NM race for Single-Handed, Double-Handed and Fully-Crewed sailboats on Lake Ontario. If you are an owner of a sailboat that could meet the Offshore Special Regulations (OSR) for Category 3 without a life raft and might be interested in such a race, please complete the survey linked below. More details are provided in the survey itself. The survey will close on May 15, 2026. Please send any inquiries or comments to info@loor.ca.

[CLICK FOR SURVEY](#)

Thank you from Lake Ontario Offshore Racing for your assistance.

GLSS Partnership Opportunities ...

The Great Lakes Singlehanded Society would like to partner with sailing suppliers, sailing enthusiasts and sailing fans, to help you spread the word about your company, interests, products and services. Partnerships start at \$75 for the Patron level, which gets your name listed in the Annual General Meeting and GLSS race booklets, and range up to \$750 for the Gold Partner level, which gets your name and logo listed on the GLSS website, in the newsletter, with full page ads in the Annual General Meeting and race booklets (on the covers, if available), and displayed on the GLSS banner at skipper's meetings. Additional sponsorships and partnerships are available. [Download the 2026 sponsor form here](#).

For more information or to get questions answered, email [Jack Jamison](#).

Spring Safety Seminars ...

On March 20th, Russ Krock, Jake Thomas and Rob Burger hosted a GLSS Safety Seminar at Sandusky Sailing Club in coordination with the Club's weekly Friday Night Feed. Numerous topics were covered, including how to qualify for a GLSS challenge, rest and nutrition strategies, equipping your boat, getting to know your autopilot, upcoming Solo Shakedown, etc. Several other GLSS members chimed in with advice and comments, while about twenty attendees demonstrated interest and asked quite a few questions.

On April 25th at Great Lakes Yacht Club, Joey Baker, an experienced singlehanded sailor, did a deep dive into preparing for a solo offshore challenge. Key topics included autopilots, safety, sleep management, onboard repairs, and strategies for handling bad weather.

Joey Baker became a GLSS member in 2013 when he successfully sailed his Catalina 38, EUPHORIA, to the finish line to complete the Port Huron to Mackinac Island Solo Challenge

Shakedown Season is Almost Here!

Over the next few weeks, as we sand, paint, install new equipment, organize gear, and review checklists in anticipation of another great sailing season, how are you going to test everything out prior to your first Challenge?

A Solo Shakedown of course!

The inaugural Solo Shakedown was held in 2022 in Sandusky at the Sandusky Sailing Club with ten participants and has grown to four simultaneous events now, including Muskegon Michigan, Erie Pennsylvania, and Lake St. Clair. Also possibly one out of the Chicago area this year.

What is a Shakedown? A Shakedown is the epitome of solo sailing as we see it at the GLSS — a group of sailors making a long distance passage together, talking on the radio, and helping each other with the common goal of a safe, successful completion. This is a great chance for experienced GLSS members to prepare for a longer Challenge, and an even more important opportunity for others to learn and even complete their 100 mile/24 hour

qualifier on their journey to the GLSS start line. And of course the great camaraderie and sea stories before, during, and after the event.

Typically, a Friday night social/meal and Skipper's Meeting will be held to talk about the GLSS, Safety, Sleep, Food, Radio Comms, Autopilots/Electrical, the course and expected weather. Departure mid morning on Saturday gives time for last minute preparations and help for first timers. Expected return on Sunday morning and a recap of the event by everyone usually follow before heading back to home ports.

No entry fee, ratings, flags, YachtScoring, or complicated sailing instructions; just solo sailing. So please check the [calendar on www.solosailors.org](http://www.solosailors.org) for updates or contact a location near you for more info. Events will be held on May 30th unless otherwise shown. If you would like to host a Shakedown at your location please contact Russ Krock. It is easy and fun to do and a great way to introduce others to our organization.

LOCATION

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Lake Michigan, Muskegon, MI | Tom Cooper | tcooper160@yahoo.com |
| Lake Erie – Sandusky, OH | Russ Krock | rbk42058@gmail.com |
| Lake Erie – Erie, PA | Jack Jamison | jdj1974cam@live.com |
| Lake St. Clair – St. Clair, MI | Noel Gingrich | runnoelrun@gmail.com |

2026 Annual General Meeting Recap

This year's AGM was held at the Toledo Renaissance Downtown Hotel, which provided excellent facilities. This was the first AGM to be held in Toledo, Ohio, which is a convenient venue due to its location central to the Great Lakes region. The temperatures hovered in the single digits the whole weekend, and the snow storm that arrived late

Saturday night complicated the return trip home for some. Despite Mother Nature's curveballs, we enjoyed the first annual Shakedown mixer on Friday night (thanks for the first round, Russ!), lunch on Saturday at the original Tony Packo's, a private tour of the newly-opened Western Lake Erie Historical Society, and a good meeting and buffet

dinner on Saturday evening. But for me, the highlight of the weekend was Tim Kent's presentation on his Around Alone race in 2002 - 2003.

Rob Burger, Editor

Here are some photos to memorialize the 2026 AGM ...



Russ Krock, GLSS President, opening the 2026 Annual General Meeting.



Tim Kent, Adventurer and GLSS member since 1997 when he completed the Chicago to Mackinac Island Solo Challenge aboard his C&C 37 *Quicksilver*. Tim's book, "A Boat Shaped Mind," is available at <https://a.co/d/e5KmBlm>.



GLSS members and guests milling around and socializing before the meeting.



Most of the 2026 Board of Directors [from left: Jack Jamison, Elisabeth Reichling, Martin McKenzie, Jeff Marshall, Luke Brockman].



Lease Shock receives his long-overdue Five Lakes achievement award, which he completed in 2017.



Noel Brockman receives his Five Lakes achievement award following his completion of the 2025 Chicago to Mackinac Island Solo Challenge aboard his Olsen 30 *Quick & Dirty*.



Steve Snare (S2 9.1, *007*) and Ben Thorsen (C&C 99, *Scarlet Fire*) received their plaques to commemorate having successfully completed five GLSS challenges.



Left: Mac McKenzie receives his award for having successfully completed ten GLSS challenges aboard his C&C 37 MkI, *Worthy Pearl*.

Right: Blair Arden receives his award for having completed Fifty-Five (55) GLSS challenges, most of them aboard his Columbia 26, but recently aboard his Jeneau 34 *Sunrise*, both named *Otis B. Driftwood*. WOW!





Luke Brockman receives the Founders' Award for his efforts in bettering the GLSS.



On behalf of the Erie Yacht Club, Jack Jamison accepts the Commodore Perry Award. Erie Yacht Club has been an integral part of the Lake Erie Solo Challenge, hosting the finish, since the inaugural challenge in 2007, and the Club is home to numerous GLSS members. The 2026 edition will be the LESC's twentieth.



Mac McKenzie receives his medallion for completing the 2025 Lake Ontario 300.



Lease Shock receives the new Spirit Cup award, exemplifying the "Never Give Up, No Matter What" inspiration.



Lake Erie Solo Challenge finishers with their medallions: Blair Arden, Luke Brockman, Noel Brockman, Ben Thorsen, Jake Thomas, Duke Mueller, Jack Jamison, [Russ Krock], and Jeff Marshall.



Noel Brockman and Tom Cooper receive their medallions for completing the 2025 Chicago to Mackinac Solo Challenge.



Receiving their medallions for completing the 2025 Port Huron to Mackinac Solo Challenge are Steve Snare, Blair Arden, Ben Thorsen, Joey Baker, Jeff Daudert, Kris Tonn, and Russ Krock.

Visit to the Western Lake Erie Historical Society

Located at 3024 131st Street, Toledo, Ohio, the newly-opened museum contains a treasure trove of artifacts memorializing the rich history of ships, ports, shipbuilding, industry and people who made Toledo and its associated maritime activities an important component in the development of the Great Lakes into the backbone of the Midwest's industrial and tourism sectors.

The museum is curated by John Thompson (pictured in the photos on the right giving our group a fantastic private tour Saturday afternoon). John's day job is Manager of Programs at the Fort Meigs Historical Site in Perrysburg, Ohio, so he knows his history.

The Western Lake Erie Historical Society has a [website](#) that provides information about current exhibits and lists the hours when it is open to the public.

While in the Toledo area, you might as well also visit [Fort Meigs](#), with its War of 1812 Museum and reconstructed fort.



Receiving their medallions for completing the 2025 Trans Superior Solo Challenge are Steve Snare, Noel Gingerich, Bob Stach, Jeff Daudert, Rob Burger, and Russ Krock.





DIGITAL SELECTIVE CALLING

5 February 2026

Follow Up to LYH Meeting



Most recreational boats, know that the SOS button on their VHF radio uses DSC (Digital Selective Calling) but they do not know much about or how to make individual or group calls using DSC.

Advantages

The use of DSC for making individual or group calls is widely supported by the USCG as it offers advantages to conventional hailing on busy communication channels. Specifically it offers:

- DSC avoids congesting common channels 16/9
- Generally is much quicker and more productive
- It is simple to set-up and make DSC calls
- Offers better connection success compared to hailing
- Can be made to individual or groups

Types of DSC Call

There can be a number of DSC calls that range from urgent distress to routine contact and position request calls. There are normally seven types of DSC calls:

- Distress call (can specify types of issues) press SOS button
- Individual call - select from menu
- Group call - select from menu
- All ships call - select from menu
- Position request - select from menu
- Position report - respond to incoming message or select from menu
- Distress alert message (sends MMSI, position, time and nature of distress) to USCG - select from menu

Setting up a DSC call is simple to do and it is always suggested that one add MMSI numbers in the radios directory before hand, which speeds up the call alot. It is also best to check ahead of the call to see which channel is available and offers the power you may want. Many channels only offer limited 1 W output power instead of 4, 6, or 25 W available on most radios. Once ready the steps on most radios are:

Steps To Make A DSC Call - Press select

1. Menu
2. DSC call
3. Individual (or other)
4. Memory
5. Select the boat (or person) name shown in directory
6. Select channel (my radio shows 11 channels available for DSC)
7. Wait for acknowledgement from boat called
8. Press transmit by caller to start call

The standard VHF high volume alarm is sent to the called vessels radio no matter what channel it is set to and will automatically turn their radio to the correct channel for the call. The caller also has the option to accept the call (in which case the caller starts the call with their mike) or they can decline and even give a short message back to the caller.

Broadcast transmit power on most fixed base radios offers both 1W (for short range) and 25W (for full long range). While most hand held units are limited to 1, 4 or 6W of power output. Most of the available VHF channels can operate on full 25W of power but some are limited to only 1W (channel 13, 17, 67, and 77).

Credit to the USCG for the above brochure and to Jack Wolf for bringing it to our attention. For more information on DSC services ...

[Digital Selective Calling — An Underutilized Maritime Distress Alerting Option](#)

[USCG Navigation Center — Digital Selective Calling](#)

[USCG Search and Rescue — Digital Selective Calling](#)

Calendar of GLSS-Sponsored Events for 2026

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| May 30 | Solo Shakedown (solo-shakedown) |
| June 20 | Mackinac Solo Challenges (Solo Macs) |
| July 11 | Lake Ontario Solo Challenge (LO 300/600) |
| August 8 | Lake Erie Solo Challenge (LESC) |
| August 28 | Lake Michigan Solo/Double Scramble (link) |
| September 12 | Lower Lake Huron Solo (link) |
| September 19 | Sandusky 45005 (link) |
| September 26 | St. Clair Solo (link) |

* Participation in events in **bold** require compliance with the GLSS Equipment List; *and for non-members*, they also require Board approval of an entrant's application that includes documentation of a qualifying sail of at least 24 hours and at least 100 statute miles and a completed sailing résumé.

Editor's Note

Rob Burger, Editor

Rob became a member of the GLSS when he completed the 2014 Lake Erie Solo Challenge in his Beneteau Oceanis 41, *Storm's Harbor*. If you have any content, questions, corrections, etc., for the *Solo Challenger*, please email Rob at gr8laksalr@me.com.

National Data Buoy Center

The National Data Buoy Center (NDBC), a department of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), maintains hundreds of weather stations around the world, many of which are the yellow buoys we are familiar with on the Great Lakes (like 45005 in Lake Erie, 45003 in north Lake Huron, and 45007 in south Lake Michigan). Go to <https://www.ndbc.noaa.gov> to see an interactive map and associated resources for accessing each station, including station status, current observations, buoy cams, and historical data, etc.

WEBSITE SPOTLIGHT

Past editions of the *Solo Challenger* newsletter are available on the GLSS website. Go to <https://www.solosailors.org/solo-challenger> for a complete list.

Thank you, Sponsors!

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