

2025 NCESA Nationals Regatta Report –

Kyle Navin I-11

Little Egg Harbor Yacht Club put on another fantastic National Championship for the E Scow class this year. As the regatta drew near and teams began studying the forecast, I think many of us were reminded of the year before. The wind forecast looked similar — a big blow — but hopefully with warmer temps. Having missed out at the windy Nationals last year, I was excited to race in epic E Scow conditions.

My team for this event had never sailed together before, so we decided to arrive early to practice. Thanks to my mom and dad for driving the boat out while I went to my last first day of school before flying out with fourth crew, Quin Frazier. My jib man was Norman Berge, who had never sailed on a scow before. I've sailed plenty of Melges 24s with him and knew he was up to the task. My dad sat in the middle for this event after switching between jib and middle all season.

Thursday, we headed out for a practice sail with the wind already at 15–20 knots and building. It was a classic summer day on Little Egg Harbor with winds from the south, sunshine, and a building sea state. The first thing we did was hoist the spinnaker and rip down the bay! I think Norm was hooked on E Scow sailing immediately. After a few laps, we headed in and felt ready for the first day of racing.

Conditions on Day 1 were about as good as it gets for E Scows, with winds out of the southeast at 14 knots and a sunny 75 degrees. At noon, the gun went off and we were racing. The whole race was a dogfight among the top ten boats, one small mistake and you would get passed. By the finish, the top five boats were separated by only about ten boat lengths. Finn Rowe and his team on *I-59* nailed the final tack and jumped from third to first in a matter of seconds.

For Race 2 the wind increased, and the sea state picked up. By the time we reached the windward mark, it was blowing a steady 20 knots. Unfortunately, we were over early and rounded in about 30th. I decided to gybe-set and was soon blasting downwind at 18 knots. That move helped us pass about 15 boats by the leeward mark, where there was plenty of carnage. Several top boats had snapped masts or flipped. We navigated through the chaos and fought back to finish in the top ten. *I-66* took the win, just ahead of *I-59*. With conditions reaching class limits, the race committee sent us in.

Day 2 conditions were nearly identical except the wind was forecasted to build even earlier. The sea state had grown overnight and as we left the channel, we knew it would be another full-on day.

Up the first beat, teams searched for flatter water as the waves made driving, especially downwind, extremely challenging. I clearly remember how gnarly that first run was. We rounded the first mark in about sixth or seventh. Everyone straight-set ahead of me, and as we prepared to gybe, I saw *I-59* stuff their bow into a wave and flip. The key in those conditions is to keep the bow from digging mid-gybe, which is easier said than done.

We made a clean gybe and rounded the leeward gate safely, passing a few boats as others flipped behind us. On the final beat, I split left with *SC-55* while others went right. The right paid slightly, and Jack Brown on *SS-11* took the win, with a few boats close behind and just ahead of us. That one race was all we got for Day 2 — again, the wind hit class limits, and we were sent in. That afternoon there was plenty of boat repair to be had in the parking lot!

Little Egg Harbor Yacht Club hosted a great party Saturday evening. The food was amazing, and everyone had fun swapping stories about the carnage from the first two days. Once the music started, the party got going — there was dancing in the rain, and I even heard rumors of a swimming party off the dock!

The final day brought a total change in conditions — cooler temperatures, overcast skies, lighter and shiftier winds from the north. It was shaping up for a fantastic day of racing.

The first race had plenty of passing lanes, and we climbed steadily through the fleet, making a great move on the last upwind to finish third. After that race, I knew we had a shot at winning the regatta but stayed focused on having one more solid race.

During the prestart, I did my usual homework to figure out the favored end and side, but something wasn't adding up. The line looked more boat favored than my numbers suggested. I set up below *I-49*, with *I-66* a few boats to windward and surrounded by other top boats. When the gun went off, it was clear the line was indeed boat favored, and our competition had a slight edge. My team kept the boat moving fast, and within minutes the boats on our hip had fallen into us. We tacked onto port and crossed the fleet. I've never had a first beat set up so perfectly.

As soon as we tacked, we were on layline and leading the race. During that leg, I got a bit hungry, so Quin handed me an energy bar and some water. My dad couldn't believe I was eating while leading the race — we still laugh about it!

It started to rain during the first downwind leg so hard I couldn't see the marks, so I asked Quin to find them. We gybed near layline, with *I-59* crossing behind and heading deeper into the corner, gaining a bit. Up the second beat, we lost some ground managing boats splitting behind us but still rounded the top mark in first. The final

downwind was much simpler without the rain. We played it safe, staying between the marks and the boats behind.

As we rounded the leeward marks for the last upwind, we realized we had a real chance to win. We needed to beat *I-66* by eight places, not an easy feat, and at the moment we had it. We sailed a smart, conservative final beat, making sure no one had too much leverage on us. Crossing the line in first was an incredible feeling — we'd done everything we could. Watching the rest of the fleet finish and counting the boats was surreal to see if we had enough between us. It took us a while to be sure we won but once we did the joy and excitement was amazing!

Winning my first E Scow Nationals with my dad on board is something I'll never forget and is a moment we'll share forever. Having Norman and Quin with us made it even more special as I've done a lot of sailing with them, and to win a big one together was awesome.

Huge thanks to my team, to the RC who did a great job with crazy conditions, the NCESA and LEHYC for putting on a wonderful National event.