Newport Beach to host junior sailing nationals

Three of the most prestigious junior sailor awards will be up for grabs in Newport Beach when 70 top U.S. sailors start competition for three national championships beginning Monday.

At stake will be the Sears Cup for the four-handed sailing title, the Bemis Trophy for the double-handed championship, and the Smythe Trophy for single-handers.

The event is the annual USYRU-Rolex junior sailing championships and will be hosted by Newport Harbor Yacht Club for Area J, one of the United States Yacht Racing Union’s 10 areas.

The Sears Cup is the oldest and most prestigious of the three junior national trophies. It was first placed in competition in 1921 by Herbert M. Sears of Eastern Yacht Club, Marblehead, Mass.

The emblem of the junior sailing championship was to be competed for annually by a triple-handed team. Young persons whose parents or guardians were members of Massachusetts yacht clubs were eligible.

In 1922 the Massachusetts yacht club restriction was removed and crews from Larchmont Yacht Club, Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club and Cedarhurst Yacht Club were invited to compete.

Eastern Yacht Club continued to conduct a series of matches for the cup each year through 1930. In 1931 the deed of gift was changed and the contests are now conducted under the direction of USYRU.

By action taken in 1954, the final races for the Sears Cup can be conducted by a yacht club located anywhere in the North America, and in recent years has been conducted in conjunction with Bemis and Smythe series.

This year the Sears will be sailed in Etchells-22 keelboats. The size and complexity of the boat demand that a fourth crew be added for this traditional three-person team competition.

The F. Greg Bemis Trophy, awarded to a double-handed team, was donated by sailors who served as regatta officials with Bemis for junior and intercollegiate competitions. It was presented in recognition of his many contributions to yacht racing on behalf of young sailors in North America. The first competition for the Bemis Trophy was held in 1975. It is sailed concurrently with the Sears and Smythe series.

The D. Verner Smythe Trophy was donated by friends of the National Junior Sailing Program and dedicated to Smythe in appreciation for his many years of support to junior sailing activities. It was first placed in competition in 1974.