Olympic Sailing Fete is Nov. 6-16 At HYC

The Houston Yacht Club in Shoreacres will host the Olympic Sailing Trials Nov. 6-16.

Sailors attending this event are competing for the spots allocated to the US Sailing Team for the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece. This is a winner takes all event. The classes competing are the Laser single-handed, the men’s 470 double-handed, and the women’s 470 double-handed.

In the Laser class only, a qualification system is used to determine the 32 sailors who will compete in the Laser Trials. As a result, only the best Laser sailors in the United States make it to this premier event. Some who have made the cut include 2002 ISAF Youth World Champion Andrew Campbell; John Myrkdal, 2000 Olympian representing the Laser; and Houston Yacht Club’s very own Mattia D’Errico and Chad Wilson.

The Laser racing will not only be top-notch, it could very well come down to the last race due to the quality and depth of the competitive fleet.

Both the men’s 470 and the women’s 470 are open events, with no pre-qualifying needed. Among the sailors spectators can expect to see in the men’s division will be two-time Olympic silver medalist Paul Foerster with crew Kevin Burnham, who is another past Olympian and Olympic silver medalist. Also on hand will be Steven Hunt and Eben Russell. Hunt finished the 2002 Pre-trials at Houston Yacht Club last fall with then crew Michael Miller.

Some other teams that are practicing hard and focusing on winning the Trials include Mark Ivey/Howard Cromwell and Mikee Anderson-Mittering/Graham Biel. 470 sailing in the women’s division also carries some top-notch talent into the competition. Two-time No. 1 ranked US Sailing Team members Katie McDowell and Isabelle Kinsolving will be challenged by several highly talented and competitive teams, including Erin Maxwell and Jen Morgan, who have been pacing hard with a ninth place finish at Kiel Week this past summer.

The interesting thing about the skippers of these two teams is that they are the two most decorated female collegiate sailors in history. Other sailors of interest include two-time Olympian and 1996 Olympic bronze medalist (Europe Dinghy) Courtenay Becker Dey and crew Linda Wennerstrom -- two sailors full of talent who should never be underestimated -- and 1988 Olympic gold medalist Allison Jolly with crew Susie Reischmann-Taylor. Finishing up the talented group of women is Amanda Clark, a former Europe Dinghy sailor placing third at the 2000 Trials, and crew Sarah Mergenthaler.

The volunteers organizing the Trials on behalf of the Houston Yacht Club are working hard to ensure the best possible event for these sailors. The support that has been received from all the members club has been phenomenal.