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## Great Chesapeake Bay Schooner Race Promises to Be Another Thriller as Maryland and Virginia Boats Compete

A field of 53 tall ships will storm across the starting line on October 16 as the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Great Chesapeake Bay Schooner Race begins, with last year's winner, Schooner *Virginia*, seeking to defend her title against arch-rival *Pride of Baltimore II*.

Schooners from throughout the East Coast, including a classic beauty, *Freedom Schooner Amistad*, will compete. *Amistad*, built at Mystic Seaport, Conn., is Connecticut's official tall ship.

The schooner fleet will once again be racing to save the Bay, with proceeds going to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The purpose of the race is to promote awareness of the Bay's maritime heritage and to encourage the preservation and improvement of its natural resources.

The race events begin in Fells Point, Maryland on Wednesday, October 15, with the race itself scheduled for the next day. The schooners cross the starting line off Annapolis and finish 127 nautical miles later at Thimble Shoals off Hampton. They proceed to Portsmouth for docking and the awards ceremony on the 18th.

If this year's contest anything like last October, it should be every bit as heart-stopping. Both the *Virginia* and the *Pride* smashed the old course record, with *Virginia*'s tall ship finishing just after midnight in an unheard-of elapsed time of 11 hours eighteen minutes. That's more than an hour faster than the previous record. The *Pride*, which had been shadowing the *Virginia* all afternoon and evening, crossed the line nine minutes later.

This year's race will break a tie, since the two schooners finished in reverse order in 2006.

The proceeds of the race are used to support the future preservation of the Bay through youth education programs. All told, the race has donated \$104,600 to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, providing more than 2,000 children with on-water educational experiences.

The Great Chesapeake Bay Schooner Race originated as a personal challenge between Lane Briggs' "Tugantine" *Norfolk Rebel* and the *Pride of Baltimore II*. It was his commitment to the maritime heritage of the Chesapeake and his love of schooner-rigged sailboats that drove the event. As more than 50 schooners participate in the 2008 race, it is important that we remember the legacy that Captain Lane Briggs bestowed on all of us.