

Port O' Pints brews up Best in Show award

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Crescent City brewery Port O' Pints overwhelmed the competition in winning a Best in Show award at the 16th-annual "Hops in Humboldt" event Aug. 26 in Fortuna, California, about 18 miles south of Eureka.

That's yet another award for owner Rick White's growing trophy rack, having added 20 craft beer honors in the past two years. That includes the Mayor's Award at the 2018 "Hops in Humboldt."

This year, Port O' Pints was up against 51 other breweries from across the nation. To improve the odds of winning, White said, they submitted 19 beers — 18 on tap and another in a cask, a new entry record for the event.

"One of the other brewers, who had 16 beers submitted, came over and joked he was kicking my butt, until he saw how many we had," White said. "But we established some really good friendships with the other breweries."

White said Best in Show isn't awarded to a specific beer. Rather, it's an overall quality award for a competitor's total submissions.

Three other local breweries won awards there this year: Six Rivers won Sponsor's Choice, Lost Coast won Best of Humboldt, and Eel River won Mayor's Choice.

White believes two other factors contributed to Port O' Pint's win. First, his team had a catchy theme: "Beerbusters," based on the 1980s movie "Ghostbusters." The brewery's booth featured all-1980s music and clothes. "To have a theme at a competition like this helps you and helps promote the event," said White.

The second factor, he said, was the support his team received from a big contingent of Crescent City attendees. "All these patrons came down and participated. Without the whole group, we wouldn't have won. It was a group effort."

John Taylor, one of the "Hops in Humboldt" organizers, said Port O' Pint's win was impressive in terms of the amount of effort they put forth. "They were very, very excited," said Taylor. "To bring 19 brews shows their ambition.

"They really put their best foot forward and had a ton of enthusiasm. Having that much fun makes everybody else have a good time."

White established Port O' Pints on Nov. 19, 2015. He said the brewery's specialty is its diverse styles; he's always rotating in new brews. While some breweries feature one or two new styles at a time, White said, he likes to mix in six or eight brews his patrons have not yet seen.

"We try to make a lot of beers you can't find in a store, like our Rosemary Saison. It's a French/Belgian, featuring rosemary growing right out in front of the brewery.

"We make it in collaboration with Woody's Brewing out of Redding," White said.

He added that, "We're developing a beer culture (here). We've a ways to go to catch up to something like Portland, but it's hugely supported.

"And it helps with Crescent City. People are not just going to stop and get gas, check out a brewery and keep on going. Now they'll make a long weekend of it, checking out all of the breweries. We'll see a lot of foot traffic because of this win."

Said White, "A lot of patrons have made trips here because of the surfing. Now they have other options."

Taylor said "Hops in Humboldt" is a charitable organization that last year raised about \$40,000 for community programs, including sports, youth, drug-and-alcohol prevention, schools, seniors and movies in the park. This year's figure has yet to be totaled, he said.