

Ground Hog Race, March 10, 2019

Commentary by Tony Brogan and Greg Taylor:

Seven skippers and crews convened at the skippers meeting to plan our race. It was to be Groundhog Day again. I have to admire my fellow racers. Everybody was keen and excited about the day ahead even though there wasn't enough breeze to float Forrest Gump's feather. Maybe it was getting an extra hour's sleep after springing forward the night before. We decided to include a short course to ensure we were home for the following day's breakfast in case the wind didn't improve.

Skeena Cloud, Deryn Mor (our past FCR/sage), Shingebiss (with a crew of hot shot sailors), Imp who joined us for the first time this season, Evangeline who is always a welcome addition, Oasis and his seasoned and wise crew, and, of course, Radiant Heat with a crew that will surely make it a contender at VIRS races, ghosted up and across the starting line.

It was an iffy start. That is to say we all wondered if we were too early for the line or going to be late. Most were over within 60 seconds led by Radiant Heat at the Pin end on port, sneaking ahead of Imp bearing down on Starboard. Once across the line the fleet was spread across the harbour, each boat thinking they had the magic breeze not afforded to others only to find the reverse was true minutes later. Spinnakers were up and flying or not in a regular waving pattern like flowers waving in the breeze.

It was Shingebiss, with a wind seeker on the inner stay, who found the answer. Radiant Heat hoisted its light air .6 oz spinnaker in response. But soon after, most boats turned to head sails as the wind swung around to oscillate from the south. It took nearly an hour to make our way to Sisters light. In the mix the coast guard auxiliary visited each boat to see if any of us had an open mike on channel 16.

Imp led the fleet once we were past Second Sister, tacking along the Saltspring shore in light fluky air, trying to stay in the ebb flowing out of the harbour. Radiant Heat bet on another tactic, taking the long tack to Welbury spar and beyond where a persistent breeze had been spotted in Captain Passage. Her objective was to then get into the ebb current sweeping down over Batt Rock. Oasis thought this a grand idea too and followed in close pursuit. Radiant Heat went on to the Scott Point shore to find the breeze that still there. Oasis tacked short on the fringe of the wind and was just short of the tidal stream that had gathered up Radiant Heat.

Thanks to its GPS, and many years of experience, Radiant Heat was able to navigate the variations in wind and current to assure that she was able to pass the mark to port and not get caught in the current and swept past the wrong side down to Channel Islands, not to be seen again. Thus proving herself, once again, smarter than Skeena Cloud.

In the meantime all the boats on the Salt spring shore found the hoped for ebb out of the harbour but had little wind to help speed their progress. They could only watch in frustration as Radiant Heat made the short course finish line.

Once past the short course finish line, Radiant Heat attempted to get to Welbury Spar, the second short course mark, but could find no traction against the tide. Radiant Heat watched first Imp and then Shingebiss claw their way across the Batt Rock finish line some half hour later, before they all furled their sails and headed for home..





Skeena Cloud, who first went with those tacking along the SS shore, broke away, and sailed off after Oasis and Radiant Heat to see if she too could find the strong ebb current flowing out of Captain's Pass. It was a slow frustrating process as the oscillating head wind seemed bent on preventing her from finding her way in the ebb stream. She watched as Radiant Heat was swept towards Batt Rock. Oasis was struggling, but she was getting there too. Suddenly, Skeena Cloud felt a puff of breeze on the back of her neck. Quickly furling the headsail and deploying her asymmetric she started picking up speed. Soon she was in the current stream. Picking an angle that would put her so that she would be swept down on Batt Rk while keeping herself in a wind line that Oasis was just a few meters on the wrong side of. Skeena Cloud sailed past Oasis and then turned downwind to sail past the mark. See you later Oasis.

But, as usual, Oasis, being much more experienced and patient than Skeena Cloud, calmly watched Skeena Cloud being swept by Batt Rk into a wind hole. Skeena Cloud now had to figure out how to get back to, and around Batt Rk. Meanwhile, the breeze found Oasis and she was able to get around the mark ahead of Skeena Cloud.

Everyone else had long headed for the barn, but Oasis and Skeena Cloud – determined cusses that they are - found some southerly breeze and decided to finish the race, whether it counted, or not. It took the fleet three hours to get to Batt Rk but only one hour for Oasis and Skeena Cloud to head back across to Welbury Spar, make the mark, and return to the club: all under spinnaker. We were often doing well over 5.5 knots, and in fact, crossed the finish line doing 5. Quite a difference from the .5 we crossed the starting line at.

Oasis kindly hosted Evangeline and Skeena Cloud for a round of beers and stories after the race. Although our decks were slick with ice in the morning. We knew spring had arrived by the time we got home.

Next week is the always fun and challenging Round Prevost Race. It's St. Patrick's Day, so wear something green or your score will not count, and only Guinness and Irish Whiskey is allowed for the after race libations.

Shenanigans, Tomfoolery, and a bit of Blarney are welcome. See you all there.

Ground Hog Day (Rerun) - 3/10/2019 at 10:30

Boat	Sail No	NHC3	Finish	Elapsed	Corrected	BCR	Points
Radiant Heat	67901	0.949	13:33:38	03:03:38	02:54:16	0.949	100
IMP		0.9	13:47:11	03:17:11	02:57:28	0.884	86
Skeena Cloud	121	0.85	14:39:20	04:09:20	03:31:56	0.699	72
Shingebiss	49077	1.044	13:57:00	03:27:00	03:36:06	0.842	57
Oasis	421	0.994	14:35:11	04:05:11	04:03:43	0.711	43
Deryn Mor		0.856		DNF			14
Evangeline		0.906		DNF			14

