

Walker Rock Race, March 3, 2019

Commentary by Tony Brogan:

Fickle winds were the order of the day this Sunday as 5 boats set to race to Governor's Rock and back. It was decided, for 2019, to replace the traditional turning mark for this race – Walkers Rock – with Governor Rock for safety reasons. There are several rockpiles adjacent to Walkers Rock. The Race Committee will discuss the issue further prior to the 2020 season. The race remained essentially the same in that it took the fleet up Trincomali to about a mile south of Fernwood dock.

Anxious minds had perused the forecast for days. It consistently said it was an Easter at 12-15 knots backing in the afternoon and easing to a Northerly 6-8 knots. It was all a pack of lies and deception.

On the dock, the skippers meeting was briefly held, and the wind was more or less east but at 6 knots. Being briefed the 5 crews made it to the boats, cast off and were soon testing rigs, sails and tactics with various degrees of success. It is difficult being single handed in the conditions now exposing themselves.

The water wave action spoke of steady wind. The instruments and the practical experience something else. What appeared to be a breeze wasn't and then again was.

Despite this the start happened in good time and soon the boats shook out in order that never really changed. This was to be a tall mast, longer waterline boat day. The two Larger boats Sorcery X closely followed by Shingebiss led the way down the harbour. We reminded ourselves that Welbury spar was a designated mark of the course on both directions. Leave to port on the way out and to starboard on the return: no cutting corners allowed.

The third boat was Radiant Heat followed at some distance by Second Wind and finally Skeena Cloud. Both single handed.

The effects of the capricious winds were apparent to those behind as the two lead boats, often within hailing distance of each, other were seen going in different directions 40 degrees apart, yet on the same tack. Often being behind the leaders is an advantage as you can see the tactics being played out and hopefully follow in the wake of the boat making the best decisions. But this was a head scratcher. The leaders were behaving like they had fleas, darting off in one direction, and then another, in no discernible pattern.



Radiant Heat found herself headed significantly, induced to tack, but only to find the tack which should be only 80-90 degrees turned out to be 100-120 degrees as the wind switched in the middle of the tack. Other times RH would see the sails back winded for the bottom half while the mast head anemometer and the top of the sail indicated no change. We even accomplished at one time a complete tack without the boat changing direction as the wind clicked through 90 of change by itself. Very smooth!! Skeena Cloud, who measures its learning curve by the number of 'meltdowns' per race, had very few over the last two or three races. But on Sunday had enough to overflow a swear jar before leaving Captain's Pass. In fact, the swear jar may have paid for a new headsail Sunday.

In the meantime the lead boats switched and danced their way to Captains passage. There appeared to be little current in any direction. The wind occasionally gusted up to 12 knot. As Radiant Heat exited Captains Pass and gained the view up Triconmali Channel, she could see Sorcery X and Shingebiss had significantly increased their leads. The two rear boats Second Wind and Skeena cloud were having their own issues and were barely past Second Sisters Light. (If Radiant Heat had only stopped and listened, she could have heard Skeena Cloud).

Skeena Cloud who started late after deciding at the last moment to put in a reef, had been slowly catching up to Second Wind, who seemed almost stopped near Welbury Spar. Skeena Cloud making 5.5 kts on a course to pass outside of Second Wind was bearing down hard, watching her tail tales on headsail and mainsail stream perfectly. Looking back to see where Second Wind was, Skeena Cloud

found herself - after following the wind for what seemed only 5 or 6 seconds - suddenly racing in towards Welbury Bay, and into the same hole Second Wind had found. Only to see Second Wind springing out of the hole, not to be seen again until she was homeward bound. Cue 'meltdown' number 13.



Radiant Heat timed the lead boats as 14 minutes ahead of RH at the rounding of Governor's Rock with the rear boats further back just making Captains Passage. The return trip was much the same. Winds went as high as 17 apparent. The continual shifts in direction occurred and added an occasional hole until we returned to Captains passage. There the water smoothed out, the wind was steady from the East, and we finally ventured to raise the kite. It was a lovely sail from Welbury to Sisters and on down the harbour at 3-6 knots of boat speed. Not one other boat of the race fleet was in sight. The winners already had open beers in hand. Skeena Cloud and Second Wind still in Captains Pass. All in all it was a cool sunny delightful day on the water. All we needed was the excuse to get out and do what would, without the race scheduled, not be done.

Skeena Cloud, being the last in line, experienced the awesome sight of the two leaders roaring down Triconmali Channel at full throttle after rounding the mark. Heeled over, blue hulls glistening in the sun, a bone in their teeth; they were magnificent. They must have both been doing well in excess of 7 knots. It was a glorious sight.



Skeena Cloud, and this is a good tip to any new racers who wants to join us, made the decision to abandon the race after she saw Second Wind round the mark a half mile ahead. Having to sail another half mile before turning would have made for a lonely sail home. So instead, Skeena Cloud joined Second Wind in an impromptu race home. It made it a fun, enjoyable, and challenging journey. And, a DNF gets you the same points as being in last place. There is nothing in the Race Instructions that says you can't make fun your first priority. And, in fact, our points system doesn't punish you for it.





Congratulations to Shingebiss and Sorcery X and crews on a well sailed race.

Walkers Rock - 3/3/2019 at 9:30

Rank	Boat	SailNo	NHC3	Finish	Elapsed	Corrected	BCR	Points
1	Sorcery X	CAN32	1.036	12:54:34	03:24:34	03:31:56	1.036	100
2	Shingebiss	49077	1.032	12:56:35	03:26:35	03:33:12	1.026	80
3	Radiant Heat	67901	0.959	13:39:40	04:09:40	03:59:26	0.849	60
4	Second Wind	175	0.992	15:01:35	05:31:35	05:28:56	0.639	40
5	Skeena Cloud	121	0.85		DNF			20