

## Patos Island Race 2019 – Radiant Heat’s Perspective

The picture below captures Radiant Heat’s excellent start in the Double-Hand Division of the Patos Island Race. Unfortunately, things cascaded downhill from there on in.

The start was delayed for a couple of hours due to the dangerously high winds produced by a weather bomb that tracked through the area Saturday morning. A lumpy, confused sea remained as the wind retreated, killing our boat speed as we entered more open water after the start.. My long-time, experienced crew, John Gauld, and I, decided to take Cordova channel to stay out of the current and avoid the worst seas. So we, and Dilligaf, a Ross 930, traded tack for tack through the Channel until we ran out of wind. Dilligaf was able to find a soft patch of breeze and took off, leaving us to labour our way to Beaumont shoals, not getting there till after 5 pm.

We then had a brief period of favourable tide before it was against us. Struggling against the current, we arrived at Turn Point in the dark, where we floated around for 5 hours. It wasn’t until early in the AM that we made our way to the South Pender shores. Leaving Pender the wind filled in and we had a good sail against the current to Patos Island. Rounding anti clockwise we enjoyed a favourable ebb until passing East Point when we again faced a stiff 2 to 3 knot current on the nose. Luckily, the breeze stayed constant and we were able to eat up a few miles.

We sailed well until the wind lightened as dawn broke near Port Browning. As the morning wore on the breeze slowly returned allowing us to fly the spinnaker for the first time. We stayed on a broad to beam reach down to Canoe Rock. Just before Canoe Rock we returned to the Genoa and made the turn in a light south easter that, along with a favourable current, carried us two miles towards Dock Island at speeds up to 7 knots over ground. Within sight of Dock Island a 40 deg windshift headed us with just 2.5 hours left to the DNF time slot.

Two tacks later and 30 minutes later we finally left Dock Island behind and turned for the finish. A radio call to notify the committee of our progress went unanswered. A phone call to the Fleet captain Patos lead to a quick chat and some surprise we were still racing. There was no committee on duty!!

The breeze dropped to near zero. Well not quite, 0.1 and 0.2 knots of wind on the anemometer were seen, just enough to shape the main. With 90 minutes to go before having to record a DNF we still had another mile and a half to go. We were making .4 - .6 knot over ground over ground. Too late I remembered the current ebbs along the shore and found that, sure enough, we were being swept down toward James Island fully 90 degrees off our course!.

We tried the windseeker was tried with no luck as there was barely enough breeze to fill it. With sixty minutes to go before cutoff, we were making fitful progress against the current. Suddenly, a zephyr appeared along the shoreline. ‘John’, I called with the few energy reserves I had left, ‘do you think we can reach it?’ Closer and closer we came to the tantalizing breeze. ‘Was that wind on my cheek?’ John, standing, felt wind in the slot. We were quickly gradually surrounded by ripples. We had 35 minutes and a half mile to go. With the breeze aft of the beam we hoisted the spinnaker. The spinnaker quickly filled and our speed left to 3 knots. We dipped towards the shore to seek help from the current, turned to finish on a reach, and crossed the line with 20 minutes left on the clock.

And so we finished, almost 21 hours after we began, last by hours. Although exhausted, we were proud we remained unbowed through a difficult race. I turned to John and said, ‘to win is nice, but if you have to lose, do it in style!’

The sailors in the club house were gracious with their compliments.

As your FCR, I know I can speak for all of SISC in thanking you for representing our Club with such an extraordinary effort and with such grit, determination, and seamanship. Congratulations.



