

Wednesday, July 16th, Race

By Tony Brogan: Radiant Heat

Only 5 boats turned out this past Wednesday. They were greeted by a SW 15 knot breeze as per the forecast. Only, as usual, the wind didn't always, or even often, adhere to what people were expecting.

While prepping RH for the sail, it was decided to rig the spinnaker as the wind seemed lighter and was blowing at the club docks from the SE! Taking a study of the anemometer 3 times I saw wind speeds of 4 knots, 6 knots and 12 knots for three different directions. There was even a brief spell of NW wind.

I should have known better than to trust a Westerly in Ganges Harbour.

Cheerful crews turned up at the skippers meeting and the only announcement was that FCR Greg would be unlikely to appear and true to his word wasn't visible anywhere (*I must give up this work thing. It is getting in the way of more important things – ed*). That being the case order was called by yours truly and the course announced:

Start

Ganges Shoal(P)

Welbury Spar (S)

Horda Shoals (S)

Batt Rock (S)

Finish

Getting the sails up required turning into the west and after a couple of runs across the harbour we were in good time to approach the start line. With 5 mins to go a hole opened up on the start line and all boats in the vicinity cruised to a stop. Those still some distance away eyed the fringes of the hole to try and get a flying start over those becalmed.

Not so fast. All boats drifted over the line driven by errant puffs of wind from different directions.

The lighter boats like Imp and Ogotogo with better acceleration eked into a position in the lead. Shigebiss and Radiant Heat a little further back. And Sparky, where was Sparky?

We had gone a half mile and Sparky was still sitting in the Start line hole, admiring the local scenery. As John said later on the Dock, "How do you guys sail in winds like that?".

Now the wind kicked in with gusts that accelerated boats forward or rounded them up in a near broach. Not a day for a spinnaker! We rounded Ganges Shoals and headed for

Welbury Spar on a beam reach, with Sparky still watching us from way back, but at least she was now moving well.

Still all in touch with each other (except poor Sparky, of course), we turned from Welbury to Horda Shoals and began to feel the Flood current in the mid channel. Ogotogo hung low to allow for the current push but the other three took the direct route as we followed around with the same order (Imp, Radiant Heat, and Shingebiss) and set off for Batt Rock.

Sparky was now rounding Welbury still aways behind. Imp and Ogotogo tacked to the right on Port tack heading back toward Sisters, shortly followed by Shingebiss, with the avowed intention of getting out of the flood tide.

Radiant Heat continued on Starboard tack getting a steady lift toward the mark. Meanwhile, Shingebiss tacked over and paralleled RH's track. Now it appeared that we were right and they were wrong, but then it reversed several times as the wind direction swung back and forth, first to one advantage and then the other.

Imp rounded Batt Rock, Ogotogo came to a halt next to the mark, RH and Shingebiss, having changed places, were both headed and forced to take the Great circle route around Batt Rock. Ogotogo idled around the mark and took off. Then Sparky, from well behind, charged from Horda Shoal in her own private wind, directly to Batt Rock, passed in front of us, and took off for home.

The westerly finally showed and more or less prevailed all the way to the club house finish, although we were all subjected to unexpected aberrations in the wind with near knock downs, then becoming becalmed, then headed, and promptly headed again after tacking.

Approaching the finish, Imp was safely home, while Ogotogo, Imp, Shingebiss (yes she had overtaken us again), and Sparky were all still on the starboard side. RH in a new wind found by Walters Spit was making a mad dash for the finish. Gyle later said he could hear us coming! But before we got to the line, we were met with the inevitable header, while the others picked up the wind again

After Imp, there was only a minute between the finish times for the other 4 boats.

It was another interesting day on the water and the dockside tables were populated with animated crews swapping tales of the weird wind swings while munching snacks, followed by the occasional slurp. It was sunny and the breeze was calmed to near nothing.

I tried to figure out is why the winds were what they were.

Around here the topography runs NE and SW. The winds usually follow the straits and the valleys. But when the wind here is a fixed Westerly strange things happen. The wind flows over the mountains and down through the gaps. On Saltspring the gaps spill out on to the water. The wind plunges down and when it hits the surface it pills in all directions. This is not consistent but often. Sometimes the pressure is greater over this gap or that and so the wind does not drop consistently but randomly. Depending where the boat is in the splash area the wind can be from any point of the compass. That is my theory!! Any others?

(From someone who has spent thousands of hours in a small plane, from Sitka to Barkley Sound, flying at low elevations looking for salmon and herring; Tony has it exactly right. Strong, gusty westerlies roll over headlands and ridges, plunging straight down with enough force to create large circular divots in the water, sending out wind in every direction. Sometimes, in Alaska and Haida Gwai such winds can hit at near hurricane force. The only thing that kept us (if we were too low and in the wrong place at the wrong time) from striking the water was the compression of the air between our wings and the water's surface. – ed)

Wed July #3 Inbox



Douglas 9:42 AM
to me ▾



Wed Night #3 July - 7/17/2019

Start: Start 1, Finishes: Place

Rank	Boat	SailNo	NHC3	Start	Finish	Elapsed	Corrected	BCR	Points
1	IMP	2107	0.92	17:00	18:48:45	01:48:45	01:40:03	0.92	100
2	Sparky	67901	0.89	17:00	18:55:00	01:55:00	01:42:21	0.87	80
3	Radiant Heat	67901	0.965	17:00	18:55:06	01:55:06	01:51:04	0.869	60
4	Shingebiss	49077	1.004	17:00	18:55:54	01:55:54	01:56:22	0.863	40
5	Ogopogo	2	1.104	17:00	18:54:34	01:54:34	02:06:29	0.873	20