

Pacific Yachting

Power & Sail In British Columbia

Inflatables 2001

Saltspring Island Race





Round Salt Spring Island Race

BY DAVID
DOSSOR

The Southern Ocean it's not, but participants in the **Round Salt Spring Race** brave wet weather, groundings, crab trap entanglement and large quantities of beer, all for a shot at fleeting infamy.



The phone rang.

"Dave, it's Mike. How would you like to crew for me next month in the Round Saltspring race? There'll be four of us and it'll be a lot of fun."

"Sure."

"OK, great. I'll give you all the details later. It'll be fun," he repeated.

Just like that, I was committed. Despite my offshore sailing, I'd never sailed at night in the Gulf Islands. That challenge, along with the promise of "a lot of fun," were big motivators.

And so the day dawned, cloudy and damp.

0600HRS. We board *Ten Ten*, a Cal 27, and motor out of Thieves Bay on Pender Island, heading across Swanson Channel to the start in Ganges. We discuss race tactics. Graham Leggatt will be helmsman and Mike Crown the tactician, while Brian Starkey and I will work the winches. Confidently we motor on, settling down in the cockpit with our thermos cups of steaming tea and coffee.

0800hrs. We're tied up at the outer docks of the Saltspring Island Sailing Club. This is one impressive club—fine grounds, clubhouse, and sheltered docks. Already, the docks are busy as keen sailors

check out the competition. The majority of visiting boaters had arrived the day before, and partied to the upbeat sound of the local band, *Swing Shift* while enjoying Saltspring Island chili washed down with local brewed beer from the Gulf Islands Brewery. Friday night proved a great gathering of old friends, with 40 visiting skippers and plenty of locals.

One local boat, *Fandango*, honoured its tradition of cooking roast beef on board. Nearby competitors, predictably driven wild by the aroma, approached for favours, and were repelled by *Fandango's* crew who pelted them with water balloons.

0830HRS. Time for the skippers' meeting. Last minute coffees and refreshments are taken from the clubhouse. The latest weather reports promise good winds (and good rain).

Kevin Vine, race captain and chairman for the past seven years, stands on the balcony and addresses the crowd gathered on the lawn below him. The course rules are quite straightforward: sail clockwise around Saltspring Island. The Sisters and Chain Islands are to be left to port when leaving Ganges Harbour, and to starboard when returning. Saltspring Island, Grappler Rock and Atkins Reef must be left to starboard. Among the other pertinent instructions: Should you consider a protest, "You must present your protest to the race committee within one hour of finishing. Protesters must provide rum to help the race committee reach a decision. After sampling the rum, the race committee may or may not, at its discretion, form a protest committee to consider the protest. If such a committee is formed, it will require additional rum, provided by the protesters..."

Distinctive, coloured ribbons are given out for each division, to be flown from the backstays. There are two starts, one at 1000hrs for the faster boats, another one 10 minutes later. Sixty-nine boats are competing, just six short of the maximum allowed. The race captain reminds crews and skippers of the special awards "for acts of heroism, brilliance, hilarity, gluttony, or other such noteworthy behaviour." Finally, Vine cautions helmsmen about two uncharted hazards: the underwater boulders on the southern shore of Ganges Harbour and the infamous, ubiquitous crab traps.

0900hrs. The meeting ends, with everyone confident of avoiding boulders and crab traps. The crowd heads off along

Above: Bound for first place, *Deryn Mor*, a 25' *Tanzer*, charges out of Ganges Harbour.

Left: The Round Saltspring Race is a big event. The start of the race transforms the normally peaceful Ganges Harbour into a hive of activity, with sailboats and spectators everywhere.

PHOTOS: ABOVE LEFT: C. SHANTZ; BELOW LEFT: MICHELLE MECH; ABOVE RIGHT: JOHN CAMERON



Top left: Near Beaver Point, colourful spinnakers make the most of light winds.

Above: Like many events, the Round Saltspring Race depends on volunteers to make it happen. Saltspring Islanders make sure it does.

Left: Are we there yet? Dusk finds a lone sailboat near Vesuvius Bay.

the docks to prepare for the start and I'm treated to a crab trap story.

It seems that a boat called *Captaurus* was finishing in good time as it entered Ganges Harbour. However, dusk had settled and the crab traps were difficult to pick out, so the Catalina 34 got a trap line thoroughly wrapped around its prop shaft. No matter what they did, the problem got worse. The next morning, after an embarrassing night "at anchor," the skipper managed to hitch a ride to shore, hire a diver to free the boat from the trap, and finish the race. It was 1998, the first year for the "Dave Betts Tar and Feathers trophy" for the last boat across the line. This skipper won it hands down.

0930HRS. "OK, off with the springs and let's synchronize watches," shouts Graham. "Forty minutes to the gun. Let's get the feel of things."

Up with the mainsail, off with the engine, and up with the genoa. Conversation on board is guaranteed to test the mettle of our skipper:

"Bear away, boat coming on your port side."

"No, head up."

"Christ, where did he come from?"

"You'd better tack."

"OK, ready to tack."

"No, you can't tack."

"Bear off!"

"I can't. The bloody genoa's in too tight." "That was close."

Graham, with both hands locked on the tiller, is sorely tested. He opts for peace and safety, running away from the melee of boats jostling for position.

1009hrs and 55seconds. "Five seconds, four, three, two, one," I shout.

And we're off. We're forced onto port tack, but cross the line in good time. The starboard boats soon press their advantage, so we put in a short tack, then we sheet in. Goat Island is closing fast so we go about again and see that we have a clear line.

"Let's hold this tack as long as we can," says Mike, our tactician. Brian and I now can relax a little.

"Great," says Mike. "She's sailing well."

Now, although I'm not the skipper, it seemed to me that we're sailing a little too close to the southern shore. "Is this where the boulders are?" I venture to ask.

"OK, stand by to tack," affirms our captain, thoroughly pleased with having found so much space to sail.

"Ready to tack."

"Ready."

The helm is put over but nothing happens. The boat is heeled over nicely, but stationary. We look overboard and see eel grass.

"We've bloody well gone aground," says

Brian. Capt. Graham is speechless. I look up and see the fleet sailing off into the distance. I'm mad. I was supposed to be taking photos of the race for PY and now I see my assignment disappearing before my eyes.

1017HRS. It takes a couple of minutes for all of us to fully realize that we're well and truly stuck in the mud, and that our race has only lasted five minutes. Then action.

"Down with the sails!"

"Call the race committee on Ch-9."

Now I've read about what to do when you get caught out like this. The first thing to do is to cover up the name of your boat. But no one else seems concerned. Alas the name *Ten Ten*, emblazoned on the hull, remains open for public viewing. Moreover, Mike gets on the VHF:

"This is Ten Ten."

"Pan Pan."

"No, Ten Ten. We're aground."

Before the transmission is finished, an inflatable puffs up, and its jovial occupant tries to pull us off. But it's like trying to move a stranded whale. Minutes later the Coast Guard's big rigid-hulled inflatable is alongside and cool, calm orders ensue: "Put on your PFDs, close up your hatches, put in the washboards. All stand on the low side. I'll take your main hal-yard and pull you off."

We are pulled far over and slowly, methodically, professionally, we are edged, beam on, into deeper water. The halyard is released and we're afloat again. Then comes the interrogation.

"Name of boat? Name of skipper? Address? Reason for going aground?"

Graham thrashes about for an excuse, but can only offer, "A misinterpretation of the depth of the water." A race official on the Coast Guard inflatable asks us if we intend to complete the race. Is he kidding?

"Yes, we'll sail on. We're only 40 minutes behind."

"You'd better check your bilges," the Coast Guard calls out.

1057hrs. We up sails and do our penalty turns, all fired up and ready to catch the fleet; but then we can't seem to move.



"There's water in the bilge," he shouts up.

"Is it sea or rain water?"

"No idea."

"Taste it."

A pause, then a slurp. "It tastes like beer." Enough said.

1200HRS. Finally we enter Swanson Channel. The wind lessens, the head sail is changed again, and the reef shaken out. Ahead we see the tail-enders. Mike sits on the bow. He's our computer, constantly feeding us information about sail trim with repeated suggestions to "Head up, head up!"

Brian and I relax; no more tacking for a few hours by the look of it. Graham sits for the first time, and together we all discuss how quickly we'll overtake the other

1515hrs. Approaching Bold Bluff Point, we observe strange things happening. The chart shows tide rips, overfalls, eddies and whirlpools; and in fact, the turbulent waters are playing with the boats. Some are sailing backwards, some sideways, and some spin slowly around. We adjust the sails and try to maintain steerage. *Walkabout*, a friendly rival from our own club, is gaining on us. This cannot happen! It seems we are being pushed toward the southern shore.

"Head up, head up, head up! There's a counter current over there that will take us backwards," yells Mike.

The gods are benevolent and we've escaped. We look back, gratified, to see *Walkabout* far behind.

1535hrs. A fresh wind pours down

Aboard *Ten Ten*, things got off to a bumpy start. Left: Tactician Mike Crown studies the race instructions while skipper Graham Leggatt looks on.

Bottom Left: The instructions didn't say to do *this*. Bottom right: *Ten Ten's* fearless crew: Graham Leggatt, Brian Starkey, David Dosser and Mike Crown.



boats (and how soon before lunch). Indeed, we're passing the slower boats, and even many of the faster boats which have slowed in a calm spot. The winds picks up again, and our speed increases.

"Four point eight knots over the ground. These are the conditions *Ten Ten* likes." Mike relishes the progress. And on we go—not one of the overtaken boats catching us. Down Satellite Channel we glide, sailing wing-on-wing.

1407hrs. The fickle wind forsakes us to blow down into Cowichan Bay. We pass Musgrave Landing, where Miles and Beryl Smeeton used to moor *Tzu Hang*. Then we drift with the flooding current past Burial Islet and on through Sansum Narrows.

Burgoyne Bay and we're off again. It's one tack for the next 10 miles, gaining speed as we go.

"Five point eight, five point nine, six, six point one, six point two knots over the ground," sings Brian.

"Things are going too well. You'd better check the bilges-again," says our captain. Brian leaps below with surprising alacrity.

"Still the same taste, but a little less now," he burps moments later. "I guess we're OK."

The front runners are elusive, fast disappearing around Southey Point. We approach Grappler Rock, a mark of the course which has to be left to starboard.

An amused amplified voice issues from our saviour aboard the Coast Guard inflatable, mentioning those dreaded words, "crab trap." And yes, there's a float tugging at our stern. Two stripes against us now. Brian expertly manipulates the boat hook and suddenly we're free. No *Captaurus*, this crew! Now we're truly underway, and with lots of sea room all to ourselves. The wind freshens. We change head sails, put a reef in the main, and *Ten Ten* relishes the freedom as she pounds and shudders through the choppy sea.

"Better check the bilge again," cautions Graham, adjusting his brand new Air-Force inflatable life preserver.

Brian goes below and lifts the boards.

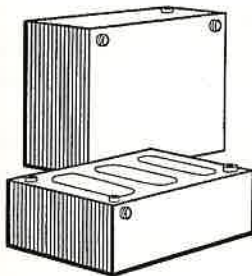
MASSEY'S MARINE SUPPLY

On The Ladner Waterfront

4907 CHISHOLM STREET,
DELTA, B.C. V4K 2K6

"Durable, Lightweight, Corrosion-Proof and Economical"

This describes all of our custom molded plastic tanks and boxes



Holding & Water Tanks

- Heavy Duty & Regular
- Each tank custom finished with your choice of plastic fittings
- 21 different sizes
- Capacity from 23 - 387 litres

Battery Boxes

- Different sizes to fit your needs



We look forward to serving you...
Come by and see us for all your boating needs

Open 7 days a week Monday to Friday 8:00-5:30

Sat 9:00-5:00 • Sun 10:00-4:00

Phone: 604-946-4488 • Fax: 604-946-4489

Email: masseymarine@dccnet.com

THE
BIG STORE

See CLEARLY Now!

Even if the rain is not gone, night falls or the fog rolls in you can see clearly with

JRC Radars



Radar 2000

1000

1500

2000

3000



Radar 1500

High quality manufacturing and low cost giving you outstanding reliability and easy operation makes JRC radars the greatest safety value of any radar

Get On Board only if it's JRC

NAVITRON

Communications Ltd.
1729 Powell Street
Vancouver, BC
(604) 258-9001
1-866-258-9001

visit us www.navitron.com
www.island.net/~stryker/

STRYKER

Electronics Ltd.
6710 Hardy Bay Rd.
Port Hardy, BC
(250) 949-8022
1-888-839-8022



1830HRS. "Last year it was pitch black by the time we were here," murmurs Mike. He tells us a 1997 story about *Merlin*, a sleek Santa Cruz 70, whose skipper was late for the skippers' meeting and didn't read the race instructions. Although they were by far the fastest, most professionally sailed boat in the fleet, they were disqualified because they passed Grappler Rock on the wrong side. At the awards ceremony, when it was announced that *Merlin* had been disqualified, the crew immediately leapt onto their boat, untied it, put the sails up, and did a 720° to exonerate themselves.

Little did we realize that the rock was going to play a key role again this year. As we round Southey Point, the wind dies and the rain arrives. Ahead we see the notorious *Captaurus*. We strive to gain on her, going tack for tack in close company. But soon the distant grey sails are obscured by darkness, and our cat-and-mouse tactics are temporarily set aside.

2215hrs. It's full night now, and I'm sitting under the dripping mainsail listening, waiting. I'm watching the red and green eyes sliding across the dark waters. This is my reward. These nocturnal creatures, sensitive to each other's presence, maneuver in silence in the light air. Then, rounding Nose Point, we pick out the green lights of Horda Shoals, soon followed by the flashing red of Second Sisters Island.

2302hrs. We're on the final stretch. However, it's back to the minefield of crap traps, so Mike goes up forward with the flashlight. We have a good breeze now, and are running along at 5kts.

2312hrs. Mike gives up on the flashlight, and we all sit in the cockpit hoping to escape a second entanglement.

2331hrs. Just minutes from the finish line, and we spot an unidentified boat ahead of us. Urged on by Mike, we try our best to sneak up on it, but fall just short. However, her harassed skipper sails on the wrong side of the finishing mark, so the honours are ours!

2340hrs. Time to eat, dry out, and join Brian in tasting the bilges. Then, at some point—I can't seem to remember—bed!

0900HRS. When we emerge the next morning, smoke is already rising from the barbecue pit. Above the coals revolve six,

succulent
are busy, a
the morn
eyed, but p

1200hrs
the lamb
canopy pr
the inter
feast is on
erosity of l

1400hrs.
mony, pre
Division w
ous prizes
classes. Th
awards," o
a boat tha
call of Gra
latter skip
erately in
(last year
a GPS). T
and Feath
home. In
said he wa
Yeah, right

Yes, it w
again. Tha
Club and a

Round T

Thetis Isl
May 11-12
Call Thetis
at 250-246
www.thetis

Round Sa
May 19-20
Call Salts
at 250-537
www.islan

Cadillac V
June 9-24
Call Janine
www.vanis

Round Bo
June 16
Call Bower
www.biyc

Round Pe
August 18
Call Pender
at 250-656

excellent Saltspring lambs. The docks are busy, and drying spinnakers chatter in the morning breeze. Everyone is red-eyed, but pleased.

1200hrs. About 200 people turn out for the lamb barbecue. This year the tent canopy provides a welcome shelter from the intermittent rain. This sumptuous feast is only possible thanks to the generosity of local businesses.

1400hrs. Now for the great awards ceremony, presided over by Terry Small. Division winners are rewarded, and generous prizes are given to the various novelty classes. There are two "going aground awards," one for our team and the other to a boat that just couldn't resist the siren call of Grappler Rock. In his defense, the latter skipper said he hit the hard deliberately in hopes of getting a good prize (last year's top rock sitter was awarded a GPS). The final "prize" was the "Tar and Feathers" award for the last boat home. In his defense, the lucky skipper said he wanted to go around unnoticed. Yeah, right.

Yes, it was fun. And yes, I'd gladly do it again. Thank you Saltspring Island Sailing Club and all of those wonderful sponsors. 🍷

Round The Island Races

Thetis Island Regatta

May 11-12

Call Thetis Island Marina

at 250-246-3464.

www.thetisland.com/Timregatta.htm

Round Saltspring Island

May 19-20

Call Saltspring Island Sailing Club

at 250-537-5873.

www.islandsails.com/sailingclub

Cadillac Van Isle 360

June 9-24

Call Janine Bell at 250-754-9236.

www.vanisle360.nisa.com

Round Bowen Island

June 16

Call Bowen Island YC at 604-947-2746.

www.biyc.bc.ca

Round Pender Island

August 18

Call Pender Island Jr. Sailing Assn.

at 250-656-0599.

REPAIR, REBUILD, RENEW.
Everything you need from the people who can help.



Resin
Kevlar®
Carbon Fiber
Mat, Cloth, Roving
Pour in Place Foam
Epoxy Resins & Putties
Vacuum Bagging Materials



FIBER-TEK

BURNABY • 1306 Boundary Rd. • 294-8116
ABBOTSFORD • 2795 Allwood • 850-0223
www.fiber-tek.com

Grey Skies and Green Water Require Maroon Performance

Mention this ad
and receive
15% off

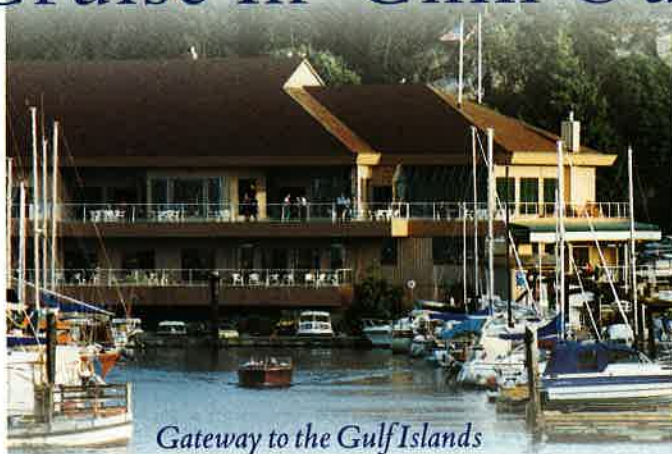


Battery World
CANADA'S BATTERY STORES



2355 Boundary Road, Vancouver B.C. V5M 4W5
Phone: (604) 473 9500 • Fax: (604) 473 9566
www.batteryworld.ca

Cruise In · Chill Out



Gateway to the Gulf Islands

Schooner Cove, the perfect waterfront getaway, features a hotel with a heated outdoor pool and restaurant, as well as great kayaking, a marina with supplies, gas and diesel fuel, and golf.

3521 Dolphin Drive
Nanoose Bay
Vancouver Island, BC
Ph: (250) 468.7691
or 1.800.663.7060
marina@fairwinds.bc.ca

FAIRWINDS
SCHOONER COVE RESORT

www.fairwinds.bc.ca