

MacMillan Race
September 29, 2019
By Tony Brogan

Forecasts for the week previous were adamant that winds would be from the North at 10-15 knots. No ifs, ands, or buts. But upon arriving at the dock there was little wind and what breeze there was, was from the SE: at 0.8 knots to be precise.

There were some funny looking clouds in ominous pancake shapes and the lower cloud was moving from the North.

After a brief skippers meeting, and being introduced to a young exchange student sailor from Sicily about to crew on Skeena Cloud with the Fleet Captain, we all headed for our boats, our pre-race strategies in tatters.

The McMillan Trophy course was a simple Batt Rock (P) , Ben Mohr (P) and home.

I still believed we would get some boisterous wind and so was fitted with a jib, double sheeted, and the main, with spinnaker set to go, but unlikely to use. All my regular crew were busy so it was to be a single-handed sail.

Out on the water with 30 minutes to the start I took 10 minutes to calibrate my speedo having just found out how to do so from a techie at Anchor Marine. The instruction manual does not mention the word speed for my B and G Plotter. Not even in the index.! Hooray, it worked so now for the first time I am able to see the current offset without guessing or looking at the current passing floats of crab pots or fixed navigational markers.

There was still little wind as I headed back to the start line and it seemed to want to back easterly. Seven boats were now adjusting sails and contemplating trial runs to start. The wind was patchy but I was able to cruise up and down the start line along with Imp and Kay D. I watched Second Wind idling north of the start and Skeena Cloud out in the harbour adjusting sails, chatting with his new crew. Shingebiss and Oasis were eyeing each other for best position on the line.

Three minutes to go and the wind died. At one minute to go Radiant Heat turned for the center of the line but nothing much happened. Flanked on my port, Skeena Cloud moved nicely past me over the line, further out was Imp, near the pin end, with Oasis, Shingebiss , and Kay D closer to the starboard end, all moving over the line.

In to the lead went Imp, followed by Kay D with Simone Cazabon as crew. Shingebiss took a line out to the left side, On the right was Oasis and Second wind. Radiant Heat was moving but in last lace and looking at the clock noted it was 4 minutes gone before I felt the fist gust.

These gusts came in fits and starts and one waited for another one to arrive rather than trying to move to a wind line. Thus the fleet moved up the harbour in fits and starts, first one boat and then another. The wind was tending northeasterly now and so when a gust arrived, it was a reach, but as the gust departed the apparent wind moved forward to near close hauled. I was busy adjusting sails and slowly progressed past Skeena Cloud. There was enough time in proximity to chat about sail set etc before Radiant heat moved away. (Where RH kindly gave us some helpful advice -ed). Then there was Kay D ahead in light air and RH closing steadily propelled with my personal wind puff.

RH planned to pass to the Starboard side of Kay D when Kay D with lack of wind was suddenly forced to fall off right into the path of Radiant Heat. In immediate danger of T-boning Kay D only 2 boat lengths ahead, Radiant Heat hardened up hard, passing by the stern of Kay D with feet or inches on the port side. All this courtesy of gusts of wind, or not, just deposited here and there.

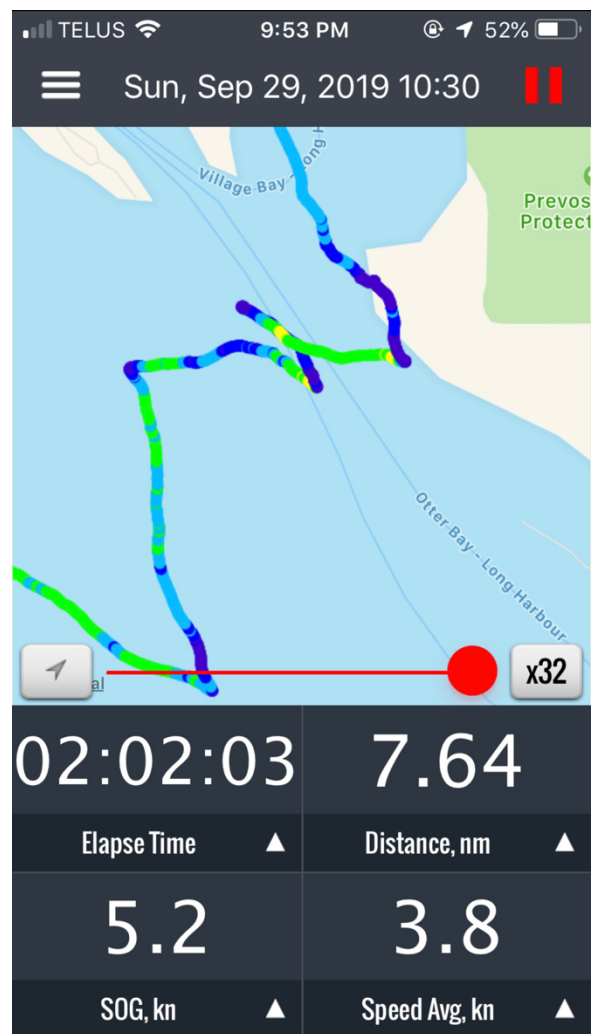
Shingebiss was along the Sisters, chain island side getting good gusts. . Oasis still on the right, Second Wind too and Kay D moved over to join them together with Imp.

The fleet was spread across the harbour. Shingebiss, in the lead, found the Second Sisters Island hole and searched briefly for wind before heading out into the passage enroute to Batt Rock. On the right side was Oasis making good time almost in the lead!. This would switch back and forth several times and so I am not sure who went around what mark in the exact order. Imp was closely following behind, On the right side further aft were Kay D , Second wind and Skeena Cloud. Kay D was pulling ahead in that group .

Radiant Heat took a course further to the left anticipating a left to right current closer to Batt Rock This took me up behind Shingebiss as she closed the mark a quarter mile ahead. Then Oasis, fighting a stiff current had to overstay the mark before tacking. Then Imp too did the same . Meantime RH found the strong ebb from left to right and bore down on the mark at two knots faster than the boat speed, passed the mark within 5 feet and hardened up into the wind, held it for 6-8 boat lengths, being now set, but tacked to Starboard up into the channel and closer to the lead boats, but further from the following boats, except KayD who was just 150 yards back, hot on my tail. This scenario would be repeated to the end.

Now with the wind from the NE to East it was a beat into Captains Passage out to Trincomali. Ahead to the left, aiming for Scott Point, was Oasis. Parallel to him was Shingebiss but heading more for Horda Shoals but in stronger current. Imp was tracking Oasis. Radiant Heat was tracking first the boat to the left and then to the right as the strengthening wind oscillated back and forth. Kay D was tracking RH but falling off to leeward bit by bit.

(Just to give you an idea of what not to do when tacking out CP against the current, here is our track, and no, we did not cheat and go overland -ed.)



Getting past Long Harbour took many tacks as the wind swung back and forth. RH was pushed toward Welbury Bay and tacked out. Oasis and Shingebiss battled each other swinging into Long Harbour and then out into Captains passage. More than one boat tacked without changing course as the wind shifted 90 degrees in a second. RH Tacked up into Long Harbour behind the leader still 2-500 yard back. Noted was Kay D 150 yards back, tacking out into the adverse current and being setback. Then RH tacked out close to Nose point heading across when there was a big big lift of 40 degrees and both RH and Imp ahead were lifted past Piele Point on Prevost out of the adverse current, into Trincomali. Kay D was now "outta sight", at last. Alas, it was not to last!

The lead boats were beset by lightening winds, but were no less capricious. Making a line for Ben Mohr was impossible and so all were set, tack and set again and again.

Shingebiss and Oasis, continuing the duel they began at the start line, had rounded the mark and headed home.

They were were soon followed at a distance by Imp and then RH who both had yet to round, and when we finally did, Imp maintained her lead . The following boats were well back. Kay D was approaching Ben Mohr a quarter mile behind. Second Wind who had trouble beating the current at Batt Rock was still in Captains Passage as was Skeena Cloud.

(Both Second Wind and Skeena Cloud were challenged by Ben Mohr. Second Wind, well ahead of Skeena Cloud, was stymied by light winds, and took some time to round. Their delay had Skeena Cloud grinning as we ate up the distance. But when we got to Ben Mohr, Second Wind had rounded and was racing back across Trincomali on a reach at 8+ knots. Skeena Cloud now had the opposite challenge. Twenty knots plus of wind would roll over the hill, pouncing onto the water, creating a visible hollow around Ben Mohr. Then quit. Then blast again. Every time we moved, we changed our position relative to the wind blasting out from the hole. There was no 'right' angle to tack onto as it was forever changing. We had to take advantage of the lulls to get ourselves into position to round the mark - ed)

It was a mixed bag of air returning across Trincomali with wind beam reach to broad reach on the starboard tack. Tides were turning but still ebbing in the passage. Looking back as Ben Mohr disappeared from view I could spot the spinnaker of Kay D. The only boat to raise one today, but it paid dividends.

The wind picked back up as we came to Welbury, The lead boats were down near Sisters, Imp on a hardened reach and now the wind allowed RH a wing on wing with the jib and main spread. Imp was slowly being reeled in again. The lead boats were finding lighter air. They were closer.

The wind increased some more and we now we hit 7 knots plus over ground as we approached the harbour entrance. Stay clear of 2nd Sister hole! and so we did, sweeping down to the left side of the harbour. The following wind was stronger than that ahead. The lead boats changed places again and they were to the right side of the harbour. Imp gybed to the left and we were closer yet. Imp gybed back and closer to the lead boats . All she had to do was to be close to beat them on handicap.

RH stayed dead down wind now and then on a reach but with wing on wing sails. The white caps behind looked like 20 knots in Welbury bay area. What was that? A spinnaker. Kay D doing 7-8-9- and 10 knots had closed the gap and was making good time down the harbour.

Oasis and Shingebiss both moved for the line now. Imp tucked in close behind, Radiant Heat further left but closer behind was also over the line. Rounding up to furl the sails we saw Kay D was 3 minutes back and soon over too.

The last two boats were away back and finally Skeena Cloud was an hour later over the line too.

For all the amount of heavy air sailed it was not a fast time as the first boats were 3 hours for 10.6 miles of rhumb line.

It was acclaimed as yet another "good sail" by those gathered on the docks in the sunshine and the breeze. Martin was congratulated on his probable win , Oasis and Shingebiss were commiserated for finding the hole before the finish.

The Micky of Rum won by the team last week in the regatta was shared around and a toast was given to "Fare winds, warm seas, pleasant company for sail boats of Saltspring Sailing club".

Skeena Cloud's Sicilian crew is in the picture below: 17 year old Fausto. He turned out to be an excellent sailor and good companion.





MacMillan - 9/29/2019

Start: Start 1, Finishes: Place

Rank	Boat	SailNo	NHC3	Start	Finish	Elapsed	Corrected	BCR	Points
1	Kay D		0.834	10:30	13:09:50	2:39:50	2:13:18	0.834	100
2	Oasis	421	0.93	10:30	13:05:39	2:35:39	2:24:45	0.856	86
3	Radiant Heat	67901	0.942	10:30	13:06:48	2:36:48	2:27:42	0.85	72
4	IMP	2107	1.009	10:30	13:06:02	2:36:02	2:37:26	0.854	57
5	Shingebiss	49077	1.039	10:30	13:05:03	2:35:03	2:41:06	0.86	43
6	Skeena Cloud	121	0.811	10:30	14:03:36	3:33:36	2:53:14	0.624	28
7	Second Wind	175	0.973	10:30	13:28:47	2:58:47	2:53:57	0.746	14