

SnowFlake #2, Dec 15, 2019

Written by Tony Brogan

The last race of the year took place in mid December and mirrored our average race conditions this past year: fine weather with lighter winds than we might ordinarily expect. But all of us can recall the exceptions where we raced in boisterous conditions.

This last Sunday forecast was set over a week ago as very light air from the Northerly range with little chance of rain, with "normal" temperatures.

And so it turned out with just 4 boats attending. The wind at the skippers meeting was zero. ZERO. Some claimed a "black line" out past Sisters but there was there maybe just a hint of wind on the cheek!!?

Radiant Heat, Phoenix with a full ladies crew, Shingebiss and Oasis were in attendance. Well Bob was sort of there as he confessed to being wakened at 09.40 but still got the boat to the F dock before 10.00! There's commitment.

The course was set as Ganges shoals (P) back through the start line and if the lead boat was within 2 hours, to go to Grace Point and round the first of the white aircraft transit lane markers(P) and then finish.

On the water it was still the same with just a vesper to move the boat at 0.2 of a knot . We circled near the line twice in 10 minutes and noticed that if the head sail was not eased physically by crew, the bow of the boat blew downwind against the helm. So, John was actively engaged in pushing and pulling the genoa into a shape where hopefully we went in a direction we wanted except downwind. (*Another generous Christmas tip from our sage – ed*)

It was not exactly a race as we took 2 minutes to get 5 boat lengths and creep over the line a minute and a half late. But it was better than some although I recall Phoenix doing well .

Slowly , slowly we edged down the harbour. .Sometimes the anemometer showed wind speed of 0.2 knots and sometimes zero but we were moving at 0.3 knots and then a half knot of boat speed over ground. The speed through the water registered zero but we could see we were moving even if the paddle wheel could not stir itself.

The breeze was NW then it was East, then NW and then West then East again. So we jibed a couple of times, or rather the boat jibed, and the main sail hung up in the backstay or remained in reverse camber after the gybe and had to be shaken in to shape. But now we moved at 1 knot with Shingebiss the same but 5 boat lengths aft and Oasis further back yet and over to the left further again was Phoenix trying out her asymmetric.

Now the wind pressure increased from the east and we were close hauled on Port tack creeping up the right shore in 32 feet of water as we approached abeam of Price Road . We were well attended by Shingebiss now 10 lengths back but a little further from shore. The other two boats now further back.

We could see a wind line approaching from the SE (not mentioned in the forecast). We would have liked to go further but were forced for lack of water now 26 feet, to tack away to the left. Fortunately for us, the wind line was approaching as quickly in the middle of the harbour , and maybe even quicker, than back at the shore we had just left.

Looking back we could see Shingebiss maxing the distance along the shore (a time tested advantage in gaining distance) (*thanks again Santa – ed*), but remaining in lighter air. We were now in 4 knots of wind making good time and then tacked back to the Ganges shoal mark.

We now crossed well ahead of Shingebiss even as we were headed 30 degrees on this tack. Our speed was better than the boats behind and now we flipped back to Starboard tack to fetch the mark and turn back for the run home.

The southeast breeze was variable and we were dead downwind with a couple of gybes for good measure We were at 2.5 to 3 knots boat speed with less than a knot of apparent wind on the dial. Looking back we could see Shingebiss making the turn with Oasis now approaching the mark in the better breeze . Phoenix still had a way to go in the still lighter air. we now concentrated on the best course to dodge the wind holes, especially the larger one spread across the harbour half way down.

We deliberately went to the right side to the Chain Islands but not all the way as there the hole widened so gybing again we we made down the harbour centre towards the outer flag of the starting/finishing gate.

Although the smaller holes we passed through slowed RH a little, our momentum took us through and we were onward again. Looking back we could see Shingebiss and Oasis doing angled gybes down the harbour in the light air. I smiled with satisfaction that today the advantage was with the symmetrical spinnaker.

As we had only 5 minutes to go for the 2 hour limit we radioed the fleet to see if they preferred the short course and yes they did! So we took our time at the transit and headed for the dock. We could see Phoenix at sisters still 20 minutes back and closer to Walters Spit was Shingebiss 10 minutes back and Oasis a little more.

John and I reflected that we had a good sail. We were lucky with the wind and made no major errors. Shingebiss alleged they were practising gybes and I maintained that after last months head sail changing practice the crew would be getting highly proficient and we expect that the 2020 performance of Shingebiss will be club champion calibre.

it has been suggested that the major reason to become club champion for the year is simply to turn up for every race and so it is no surprise that the 1,2 and 3 places for 2019 were all on the water yesterday. That is a great omen for Phoenix who will undoubtedly podium next year as they have attended every race lately.

We all celebrated the end of the season aboard Oasis, and toasted the season to come.

Thanks were proffered to Greg Taylor our FCR for an enthusiastic piloting of the 2019 season and we looked forward to his continued guidance for 2020. (*Thank you and a Merry Christmas to all, it has been my pleasure -ed*)

if you are at all inclined to join our band of merry warriors do not hesitate. There is always a welcome for anyone wanting to crew who may be looking for a boat, and an equally warm welcome to any new boat. Remember, we use a golf-style handicapping system that rates your boat according to as sailed rather than a mathematical construct based on the construction of the boat. Keep turning up and sooner or later you will be rewarded with a place on the podium and a mention as the most improved sailor!! Phoenix and Skeena Cloud are floating proof.

Happy Christmas to all
And to an enjoyable 2020.







default Snowflake #/1 Snowflake#2 Hot Rain Ben from

Snowflake 2 - 12/15/2019									
Start: Start 1, Finishes: Place									
Rank	Boat	SailNo	NHC3	Start	Finish	Elapsed	Corrected	BCR	Points
1	Radiant Heat	67901	1.037	10:30	12:24:28	1:54:28	1:58:42	1.037	
2	Phoenix		0.788	10:30	13:20:00	2:50:00	2:13:58	0.698	
3	Shingebiss	49077	1.02	10:30	12:48:09	2:18:09	2:20:55	0.859	
4	Oasis	421	0.955	10:30	12:59:05	2:29:05	2:22:22	0.796	