

Groundhog Day Race February 2, 2020

By: Tony Brogan

The Groundhog saw its shadow Sunday!!

It was a good day to be on the water. The sun popped out several times, the wind blew a steady 10-15 knots from the SSE, and it did not rain.

5 Skippers and crews were at the skippers meeting. Newbies were introduced and the courses laid out:

Start

Batt Rock (P)

New Mark #S (S)

Horda Shoals (S)

Ganges Shoals (S)

Finish 9.2 miles

5 hour time limit.

FCR Greg was welcomed back from his vacation.

We sojourned to the boat and eyed the rig. The 135 genoa was flaked on. The plan was to have a sail that was good for 10-20 knots of wind rather than the big genoa which is good to 15 knots or the jib which is too small to effectively sail in 6 knots of wind or less. It also meant a less cluttered deck.

The spinnaker was made ready to launch with the thought that a lighter downwind run might require its use. The mainsail was returned from repairs at the sailmaker with the dismal news that it may or may not last the season. I suppose that is to be expected from a 14 year well used sail. But it still hurts.

Before the start we had time to try a couple of up wind tacks to get new crew, Jim Parks, used to using self tailing winches, and the set of the boat, close hauled.

With 10 minutes to go all five boats were circling around looking for the best approach. Upon passing one another we attempted to ascertain the plans of the others. Two minutes before the start we found ourselves too close and managed a 360 in clear water. Ogoogo a bit further to starboard hardened for the line as we completed the turn, and Skeena Cloud, who had made a little trip closer to the dock and the buoys, succeeded in a well timed approach and was first over the line. *(These were heady times for Skeena Cloud and new crew Michael Pierce. In hindsight, we should have quit then and gone back to the dock to drink coffee and waited for the rest.)*

Radiant Heat ended up just astern of Shingebiss and footed off to gain clear air, while Second Wind, enjoying the breeze, was in close pursuit.

All boats enjoyed the 10-15 knot breeze. Ogotogo eased into the lead. Shingebiss moved ahead and to leeward allowing RH to harden up and move to clear air on the windward side and staying within 4 boat lengths. Second Wind was showing good form just 4 boat lengths back. Skeena Cloud was a little slower and falling back. The wind angle meant that starboard tacks were longer and port tack shorter and that is the way we went up the harbour. On the first approach to the Chain Islands Shingebiss called us for room to tack which we dutifully did even though we would have preferred to go a little further. Seeing RH give room Shingebiss immediately tacked as she is commanded by the rules to do and so we were slightly ahead of her now although a little to her lee. Ogotogo had ridden the lift on the starboard tack to extend her lead to 10-15 boat lengths and Second Wind somewhat further back was still hot on our stern.

(Meanwhile, Skeena Cloud, the skipper showing the new crew 'how's it's done' on our second tack, put the spreader through the genoa and spend 20 minutes sorting out the mess, finally resorting to starting the engine so we could turn into the wind, and that was all she wrote for us. We sailed out to Batt Rock to practice in the rising breeze while I tried to convince Michael, 'that's it's not always like this'.)

Various tacks took place as we passed sisters into the passage. We followed Ogotogo out into the passage, and as the wind increased and raised the water chop to 18 inches, we began to gain on the now overpowered Ogotogo. Shingebiss was gaining on us both as her extra weight and waterline allowed her to power forward. Second Wind also continued to stay close.

RH stayed out into the passage longer than the other boats and all four converged onto the Batt Rock mark within speaking distance. Well, yelling distance for Second Wind. Ogotogo was first around the mark followed smartly by Shingebiss, then RH, and close behind: Second Wind.

We began the run to the new Martin's Mark between Third Sister and Welbury Bay. It required some hunting as nobody was familiar with its placing. Ogotogo deployed the spinnaker and gybed off toward Horda Shoals at high speed, Shingebiss deep reached to Welbury Bay followed by Radiant Heat wing on wing and beginning to close the gap again to 5 boat lengths or so. SW was further back but still in touch. Skeena Cloud was seen leaving 2nd Sisters to enter the pass, now a mile or two back! *(Ouch)*

Gybing again Ogotogo reached into Welbury Bay looking for the mark. RH was close behind Shingebiss when we spotted what we thought was the mark and hardened to pass to port of it only to find it was a crab pot float!!!! But now Ogotogo was around the proper mark to show us where to go and Shingebiss shortly next with RH just a boat length back. *(Just a note to say the location of the new mark should not have been too much of a mystery except maybe to the first two boats as Tony and I installed it with the aid of Eric aboard Second Wind only the day before. It is the same design (thanks Douglas) as the Ganges Mark. I am pleased to see it worked as intended. The Race Committee installed it to provide more diversity of windward-leeward courses. It is named Martin's Mark because Bob Jones and Ray Martin recommended its location*

and 'Jones Mark' just doesn't have the same ring as 'Martin's Mark' – besides, seniority counts for something - ed)

Off to Horda Shoals we went and now the Welbury reef came into play . Ogotogo headed up to leave it to Port while both Shingebiss and RH footed off briefly to keep to deeper water, leaving the reef to Starboard. On the beat to Horda Shoals Shingebiss extended their lead over RH. Ogotogo was now 2-300 yards ahead. As we turned at Horda Shoals for the run back to Ganges Shoals Shingebiss was 10 boat lengths ahead of RH, with Second Wind a little further back.

Ogotogo, under spinnaker, reached down to Ganges Shoals as did both Shingebiss and Radiant heat. It was a broad to beam reach for us and we slowly clawed back distance.

Ogotogo was gybing down the harbour under somewhat lighter air in the 8-10 knot range while Shingebiss deep reached across the harbour. RH decided to not use the spinnaker choosing to sail wing on wing again straight down the left side of the harbour. We appeared to be gaining on both boats ahead and putting more distance between us and Second Wind behind us. On the final reach across the harbour Shingebiss was a little ahead of Radiant Heat. Ogotogo, already finished, was heading for the dock. A fresh gust on our beam allowed RH to cross the line less than a minute behind Shingebiss. Looking back, Second Wind was only a few minutes behind.

We all gathered around Second Wind's warm, comfortable galley table to discuss the days events over libations and snacks.



Groundhog Day - 2/2/2020

Start: Start 1, Finishes: Place

Rank	Boat	SailNo	NHC3	Start	Finish	Elapsed	Corrected	BCR	Points
1	Radiant Heat	67901	0.943	10:30	12:29:49	1:59:49	1:52:59	0.943	100
2	Shingebiss	49077	0.963	10:30	12:29:06	1:59:06	1:54:42	0.949	80
3	Second Wind	175	0.929	10:30	12:36:55	2:06:55	1:57:54	0.89	60
4	Ogopogo	2	1.116	10:30	12:21:40	1:51:40	2:04:37	1.012	40
5	Skeena Cloud	121	0.804			DNF			20