

Trincomali Channel (aka Walker Rock)

By Tony Brogan

The proceeding week was spent wondering if there would be enough wind to sail a longer race like the renamed Walker Rock. Finally the forecast settled at 4-8 knots of wind, a temperature of 0-4 degrees C, and a sunny day. The currents suggested a mild flood from 12 noon to 1600. We were good to go.

FCR scheduled the race to start an hour earlier than normal, so we all had to be on the docks for a 08.45 skippers meeting and a 09.30 start. A 1700 hour time limit was set allowing 9.5 hours for the first boat to cross the finish line with another two hours allowed for the rest of the fleet to finish.

22 skippers and crew, representing 8 boats, were on the dock under leaden skies, 2 degrees temperature, almost no wind, and calm waters. The wind vanes suggested something from the South or South West. Second Wind celebrated International Women's Day by having the Phoenix crew aboard after they discovered they had engine troubles and decided not to race.

The course was Start, Welbury (P), Governor's Rock (S), Welbury (S), finish. There were three short courses set in case the wind died.

It was decided to go ahead with the start even though there was no wind. Our trust was rewarded, as within 20 minutes to go before the start, catspaws were showing here and there, eventually filling in to form a gentle 3-6 knot southerly breeze.

We, on Radiant Heat, cruised up and down parallel to the start line 5 boat lengths back. We were joined by Imp then Oasis. The other boats bunching up a little further back. We had timed our run to be on a starboard tack about the middle of the start line. It worked out so that 10 seconds prior to the start we were able to harden up and cross the line in clear air.

Most of the fleet were at the clubhouse (starboard) end but Skeena Cloud was seen coming in alone on port tack at the pin end, ready to hit the line and tack over to starboard. *(I am pleased Tony noticed this. Shocking, even me, that it was strategy, not incompetence, that put us there – ed)*

Immediately after the start, I (RH) noted the boats on the right side of the course were faster. I wondered what was holding us back until I realized the right side of the channel had the better wind.

(My strategic brilliance didn't last long, after tacking onto starboard after the start, I passed Sparky going the other way, calling over to us he essentially said, but much more politely, 'hey dummy, why are you heading to the port side of the course, when the

wind is this way'. We sheepishly and thankfully tacked back, following him into the obvious wind line - ed)

We were quickly passed by those on the right side, led by Sorcery X in fine form, with Imp close behind, as if attached by an invisible line. Oasis, with a small bone in her teeth, then Sparky, then Shingebis followed close behind. Radiant Heat tacked over to the right behind the lead boats and set off in hot pursuit. Second Wind and Skeena Cloud were a couple of hundred yards behind. Skeena Cloud, feeling the wind switching more to the southwest, hoisted her spinnaker. It took a bit but finally it filled and she began to close the gap. Second Wind soon did the same.



The wind came and went, wavering back and forth as we all tried to tack in sync with the changes. Those who were most successful made their way to the front. Passing 2nd Sisters, we nosed ahead briefly with Sorcery X 200 yards to the right, closer to the approaching southerly. Sorcery X picked up the new wind, smartly eased out ahead, and was soon on the way for Welbury Spar and Captains passage.



One by one we all got the wind and headed for Captain's Passage. In second place was Behind Sorcery X was Imp followed by Oasis. Radiant Heat and Shingebiss, vying with each other for the better course on the left side, changed positions 3 times before reaching Nose Point.

Further back were Skeena Cloud and Second Wind duking it out under spinnaker. First, Second Wind stole the wind out of Skeena Cloud spinnaker to the delight of Second



Wind's crew, who thought it only right, it being International Woman's Day. Skeena Cloud, having none of it, dipped around Second Wind's stern, and pulled up abeam to steal Second Wind's wind: just because. As she soon had to dip back around Second Wind's stern (my crew's eyes grew very wide at this maneuver. I should have told him my depth perception is very poor) to get back on course.

When we (Radiant Heat) turned exited Captains Pass into Trincomali, we were met with an 8 knot breeze mostly from the West North West. Hardening up with the 155 genoa we were close hauled at 5-6 knots of boat speed and some residual ebb current. We noted that Shingebiss was not headed up as high as RH and being set to leeward a little more by the tide. Imp was doing the same but much further out. Sorcery X had headed up well and was already tacking back to the Saltspring side from mid channel. Shortly thereafter, she tacked back on port, and headed out to the Galiano side, well to windward of us, and considerably ahead as well. Oasis came through Captains

Passage on the right side and headed across towards Montague. Sparky followed Oasis.

It was now a long tacking duel to windward and to Governor's Rock. Again and again Shingebiss and Radiant Heat crossed, with first one and then the other ahead. Imp was out of this contest, having suffered from adverse tide on the first tack out. She was having fun with Oasis and even Sparky from time to time. But Imp slowly narrowed the gap to a quarter mile of us.

Skeena Cloud made the same mistake with the tide, and along with being slower, gave up more distance than necessary to the boats ahead. Second Wind did not take as long as tack out of Captains Pass, that and the improving wind, gave her the edge, as Skeena Cloud settled into her usual last place spot.

First around Governor's Rock was Sorcery X, a good third of a mile ahead, and was soon enjoying a graceful downwind run in the still steady wind. But soon after Sorcery X passed us we saw the first signs of a weakening wind. The wind had been strong enough to begin to overpower our genoa, so we had changed down to the 135 for a slight reduction in speed, but easier control. The weakening breeze led us to once again hoist genoa as the wind eased to 6 knots as we approached the mark.

Shingebiss was around ahead of RH but in the first minutes of the spinnaker run back RH was again ahead and remained so with the winds becoming lighter and lighter, dropping to less than 2 knots as we approached Captains Passage. It was now just the current taking us through the Pass, closely followed by Shingebiss and then Imp who had closed the gap on the last of the wind in Trincomali.

Skeena Cloud was slowly making up some distance on Second Wind on opposing tacks up Trincomali Channel. Skeena Cloud well balanced under genoa and full main, with Michael on the helm, was doing herself proud. Second Wind was over on the Walker Rock side of the course with Skeena Cloud on the Salt Spring side, both well back from Governor's Rock, when the breeze died.

The light breeze slowly shifted into the northeast, finding Second Wind well before Skeena Cloud, allowing Second Wind to steer directly for the mark. Skeena Cloud had to frustratingly wait for the breeze that never really arrived, steering a course that had us slowly closing on the mark that stubbornly remained about 500 yards to our starboard, meaning another tack into a fitful breeze. It took well over an hour to make the 1.5 nm to the mark. Meanwhile, we watched Second Wind round the mark, hoist his spinnaker, and make tracks toward home. I found out then that Michael can swear. Maybe not as creatively as me, but he did express his feelings well. The light wind continued to shift into the east, forcing Second Wind to douse his spinnaker in favour of his genoa for awhile, before the wind again allowed him to raise the spinnaker.

Once Skeena Cloud was finally around the mark (check out the picture of a still smiling or grimacing Michael getting sunburnt by the sun's reflection off the glassy surface as we rounded), we hoisted our spinnaker, if only for shade.



But eventually, a light breeze from the east filled in, and with the tight luff on our assym, we were able to make up some distance on Second Wind on a close reach. Far in the distance we could see the fleet stalled in Captain's Pass. There was a brief moment of bizarre hope that we could catch up and still make it a race. But then the wind died and Sorcery X called to say she had crossed the line. There is something dispiriting in hearing this while still on the other side of Salt Spring, watching the rest of the fleet slowly disappear – one by one – around Nose Point. But still Second Wind and Skeena Cloud stuck it out, for a while. But once the last of the fleet ahead of us had long disappeared around the corner, Second Wind (thankfully) called to say, 'beer time!'.

Changing focus, once again, back to the rest of the fleet: Oasis allegedly had made a "mistake" and was now well back, jostling for position with Sparky. It was unclear what went on, and we didn't have to find out, as we were now being overtaken by both Imp and Shingebiss after passing Welbury.

They were both closer to the coming breeze. Imp took off, leaving a 30 boat length gap between them and us. Shingebiss and RH continued swapping positions past Sisters with Imp slowing, but still well ahead.

As we turned from Welbury to Second Sisters, the wind was again from the South and spinnakers were deployed on all three boats. (*Craig told me later on the dock that Imp had her spinnaker up and down a dozen times during the race – ed*). With the wind light and variable, we huffed and puffed our way, sometimes with collapsed sails, halfway down the harbour, until a fed up RH opted for head sails, downing her spinnaker.

We were closing on Imp who had found her own private wind hole. We edged to the right as did Shingebiss and stayed in just enough breeze to keep moving. We slid by Imp a 100 yards from the finish line. First, it was Shingebiss sliding over the line, followed less than a minute later by RH and finally Imp, all an hour and a half behind the line honours winner Sorcery X, who sailed well enough to show why she is (was) rated at PHRF 71. Well sailed, Greg.

Next to cross the line was Sparky at around 17:00. About 75 yards from the line, sitting with sails dropping, he called on the VHF to ask Skeena Cloud, who was tying up after

motoring in, how much time he had left to cross the line. I am unsure if he was pleased or not when I told him another two hours. The final boat to cross the line after Sparky was a determined Oasis.

It turned out to be a great sail for the earlier boats and a frustrating day for those that did not finish due to lack of evening wind. Skeena Cloud now has an unblemished record: 3 starts, 3 DNFs.

Because the finishers were spread out over a long time there less on the dock for after sails tall tales. But those that did sat in the evening sunshine and gloried in the lovely spring weather, not in a hurry to leave, even after getting up on spring ahead Daylight Savings Day in addition to the race start being an hour earlier than normal.

PHRF	Club	Club Rating			Finish	Corrected Time	
Rating	Rating	As Sailed	Boat	Skipper	Time		Place
87	71	Slakov	SORCERY X	Slakov	15:08:48	06:12:37	1
0	175	Hillier	SPARKY	Hillier	16:59:44	07:00:36	2
138	138	Brogan	RADIANT HEAT	Brogan	16:36:05	07:00:54	3
167	138	Leitch	IMP	Leitch	16:36:28	07:01:16	4
86	131	Keating	SHINGEBISS	Keating	16:35:10	07:04:30	5
120	173	Jones	OASIS	Jones	17:39:41	07:39:17	6
186	337	Taylor	SKEENA CLOUD	Taylor	dnf		7
117	304	van Soeren	SECOND WIND	van Soeren	dnf		8

