

Snapshots from 2020 Opening Day/SailPast Race May 3, 2020

Written by Tony Brogan, with help from Martine Hebert
Pictures by Damian Sorochnynski and Chris Cheeseman,

Before you begin reading Tony and Martin's descriptions of the 2020 Opening Day Race and Sail Past, and checking out some of the pictures, it might be worthwhile to say their reports display decades of sailing experience and skill, and not a little natural talent. For the wonderful description of their races was not representative of my day on the water, which was mostly spent trying to survive from one tack to the next. I say this not only to highlight their talents, but to give you, the reader an indication that they, and all the boats around them, were racing in as challenging conditions as you might find in our local waters. I am proud to race behind them.

And speaking of challenging conditions, we thank the Commodore and his entourage for coming out in the rain and wind to receive our salute. And for not publishing pictures of me leaning well outboard, trying to retrieve a mainsheet that went AWOL in an unplanned gybe. Although, I did think collapsing in general hilarity at my antics was punishment enough ☺ - FCR



As usual Radiant Heat fretted over the forecasted wind and noted that on average the calls were for 8-10 knots from the SE. One forecast had gusts to 16 which disturbed me enough that I woke in the early hours (@3:30 no less) of Sunday morning to check the weather forecast.

Satisfied by the update, I slept so soundly that the 0800 alarm left me sleepy and groggy. I headed out the door with a much needed second mug of Kick Ass Coffee. Placing my bag of goodies with sausage rolls, a bag of chips and a banana on the floor of the car beside me, I was off to the club to see what awaited us all on for our Opening Day/SailPast Race.

At the dock I took a walk around and noted several boats arming themselves for the day. Looking up the harbour I could see a steady 8 knots out to Channel Islands. I also noted with curiosity the clouds blowing from the West. What would that do to the wind? I concluded that we might see stronger than weaker winds and there might be some abrupt. wind shifts spilling over the hills, but where and how strong, who knew?.

Overall I decided on the 115 jib rather than the 135 genoa. The 155 was never considered.

The FCR was on CH10 as 72 was occupied and a speedy roll call identified a dozen boats plus Kay D with no radio. The course was confirmed as Start, Ganges shoals (P), Return to take the Start line (P) Salute the Commodore on the dock, Out to U 60 (P) , finish. Tony Meek was asked to give an update on the upcoming RSS Club Fund Raising event, reminding us to have our entry and donations into him by May 14th.

Out on the water there was a steady 8 knots of dense wind. Wind that had power belying its speed. The 13 boats (the second race in a row with participants in the double digits!) were out getting rigged and ready on the water. With 10 minutes to go, there were several boats testing the starboard end. RH stayed clear and went across the harbour. We said Hi To Damian on Muse, learned their mainsail was repaired and there was a spare needle and thread!. 4 minutes to go and RH turned back for the starboard end and planned to be there late and avoid the bad wind of the selection of 40 plus footers that were vying for the quick start. 2 minutes and a quick circle rid 45 seconds and RH now made for the Starboard end 20 secs late but in clean air.

Boats were spread across the line and making a good start. There were two boats ahead of RH and the fleet to leeward and a little ahead., but we made good time. Considering that all were headed for the Chain Islands RH decided not to trade punches dodging and weaving as they tacked back.

We may have the right of way on starboard but too much bad air was avoided by an early tack to the right. It was then that I noticed the wind lift on the port tack. Then came a port hand header and a tack to starboard which took Radiant Heat up the harbour and all of a sudden we were in the front, in third place, behind Soul Thyme and Sorcery X, with Kay D not too far away. The rest of the fleet was well back.

The wind now was a steady 14-18 apparent wind on the beat. I was happy with choice of sail!. I was now having to be careful on the tacks as I needed two hands to trim the jib, leaving the helm briefly unattended . This was a challenge as balance was needed to set the helm over enough to turn though the tack, but not too much. If there was too much, the wind knocked over the boat now on the new tack. Instantly overpowered, the water pressure on the helm threw the boat violently back on the original tack with the jib now back winded. Such was seen with mild pleasure by Kay D, a little aft and to leeward of me. 😊. Having made that error before, the quick remedy was to release the jib, tack again and reset the jib and go sailing!

Getting the angles right for the Ganges shoals mark was a trial. The two lead boats were well around. Radiant Heat took two short tacks but failed to make the mark on the final tack and was forced into making two mini tacks to get around the mark. There was no time to trim the jib on the first as the helmsman hung on to the sheet with one hand, the helm with the other, cleared the mark and tacked back the other way. Dropping the starboard sheet and hastily grabbing the port one as we turned downwind back towards to the start-line..

Meanwhile, KayD had gained a little with better placed, longer tacks, and a smooth rounding.

And now from Martin Hebert:

Great fun on the water today and what a lovely wind we had to start. Pre race the wind was quite steady, slightly favouring the lee Port end. Having been forced over early last race I was a bit gun shy and checking for big boats to leeward so when Rampart tacked under me at 40 seconds to go I choose to dive below her transom and drive threw for the lee end. I had my watch this week so things went better. The start was won by Keith Simpson in Soul Thyme Who went on to have a pretty fabulous race. I was rolled by several big boats almost immediately and was settling in to a spot between 8th and 10th when the wind went tactical just off Deadman Island. Suddenly there were holes in the wind and shift of up to 35 degrees. At times like these it is good to have Greg Slakov well ahead and giving you the heads up for what is coming. Boats whose idea of tactics are to sail to one side of the harbour, tack and sail to the other side were soon spat out the back of

the fleet. Kay D moved up to fourth with some spectacular lifts alternating from either side of the course. Big blasts of dark water heralded the "heading" shifts but sometimes tricky lifting shifts came before them, usually in groups of three. Radiant Heat fell afoul of one of these and was taken flat aback and forced into a tack by the following header. I had visions of third place but quick work by Tony Brogan got the "heat" back on course. The run back to the start line was fun. I had the "talk" with my bumbling crew of last week and we got the spinnaker up cleanly if not fast. The three boats ahead were not flying spinnakers but we were not gaining on them as it was a dead run and not quite enough wind to plane or surf on the waves. Both Radiant Heat and Soul Thyme sailed a perfect line down to the lee mark and Soul Thyme grabbed the lead. I dropped the spinnaker early and gybed for the mark and the exciting reach across to salute the Commodore.

At this point I decided to leave the race. I would like to say it was because I foresaw the downpour but the truth was that I was getting tired and starting to make mistakes. I did not feel that I was strong enough for the long beat over to Prevost. Still I was very happy with the part of the race I had and it was glorious to see so many boats out doing what our club is all about...sailing.

And back to Tony for the balance of the race...

It was a deep reach at first, but as the wind switched a little here and there, we settled into wing on wing, making a line to Grace Point just outside the outer mark. Kay D had spinnaker up but gained only slightly on the run. The lead boats made good time with their longer waterline boat speed. The fleet was consolidating positions with the bigger boats moving forward but overall still nicely separated from the front runners. Oasis, Second Wind, Evangeline, and That's Life have stories to tell of as they stove for ascendancy.

We swooped down to the start line in the fresh 10 knot plus breeze and made a 6 knot plus crossing to the inner mark and hardened up to extend position to the south end of the docks before switching to Starboard tack for the beat to U60.

I scanned the docks for The Commodore but failed to see him. Perhaps I was too busy but I salute the Commodore and all the sailing club committees for the fine work they do for we the sailors . Thank you!! 📁

Here I noticed that KayD had retired as she headed for her berth.

We, the lead boats, tacked up the harbour a second time as the fleet cruised in on their downwind run. A few hand waves were made in greetings as we passed one another in salute to a fine day of sailing. No matter who or where, all were enjoying the ride.

The wind freshened to 22-23 knots apparent as we tacked out past the Sisters the second time. Sorcery X, and Soul Thyme were joined by new racer and Club Member Ian on the 50 plus foot That's Life. I noted she made a quiet start, sidling up to the start line, was in the pack at first, but now showing superior speed and pointing ability, nosing in to challenge for the lead. Another formidable competitor joins the fleet. Welcome.

It was at this point I saw Rampart appear out of the dark clouds that had blanked out everything but a hazy circle of about 100 meters around me. She was wisely deciding to call it a day. Deryn Mor had already done so. Pointing out the dark thunderheads building over the club as I rounded the mark. It was now raining hard enough to fill a bathtub in short order. In that I could not see any other boats ahead of me, I was soaked to the skin, cold, and a bit dispirited it seemed like a wonderful and wise notion. I decided to give it a couple of more minutes. Two minutes later, the low scud lifted just enough to show two boats ahead of me before closing down again. Damn. Were they heading out, or boats that had already rounded the mark and heading back? Peering through the rain, scudding fog, and rain I waited until it briefly lifted once more and saw the vague outlines of Muse and Minke's sterns, maybe a mile ahead. Damn again. The race was still on! – FCR



The three lead boats tacked out into Captains Passage but then tacked back toward Batt Rock doing this a couple of times. Radiant Heat decided that the long tack out to Prevost would do. I reasoned I would avoid tacks, the flood tide was light, and with luck, the tide might even ebb in Captains Passage due to the estuarine influence of the Fraser River, and that there would be a lift in the wind as I crossed the passage. Thus, as Radiant Heat crossed, it all came to pass . There was little current, certainly none to worry about . We got the wind lift, and upon checking, our course was confirmed by the majority of the fleet, which was still well back, following our track. The lead boats were still held on a leash, although admittedly, the leash was getting a little long!

Then came the winds gods. The Jokers!

Having been lifted across Captains Pass, we took a wind header to Starboard (going to a port tack) and were now headed for U 62, which we ducked by a boat length. Radiant Heat stayed on this Port tack for a while toward the leaders, who were on the Starboard tack headed to Prevost shore. Not wanting to go too far out we tacked to Starboard and found it coincided with a massive wind change to the South West and we were suddenly on a close reach to Channel Islands, well below the U 60 mark, our next rounding. The three boats ahead had the same lift but the boats behind were not yet getting it. We spread the distance from the pack but kept in touch with the lead boats.

But hold on. The wind died. 10-15 knots apparent went to 2-3 in a heartbeat. The lead boats were around two minutes from first to second another 3 minutes for the third and we were struggling. The boats behind were rapidly closing. The tide was against us, we had 2 knots of boat speed and a knot over ground. There was my nemesis , Oasis, way too close now. Evangeline too. The wind went aft then forward , then abeam and back and forth, but still we moved . The mark now 10 boat lengths , now 5, now 3 and finally in a little 3 knot puff we were around. Thank goodness we were now with the current and not against. I had had visions of drifting away from the mark and the fleet piled up with us.

Then Oasis was around too but the fleet was halted. The wind went briefly to the West North West . I contemplated a beat home . Then it changed back to the South and stayed put. Would it be a spinnaker run after all? Much of the fleet, all but the leaders who were now out of sight half way back to Sisters, were stationary near the mark. There was Evangeline, then Second Wind both struggling to make the mark as Radiant Heat now with 2 knots over ground in the right direction exchanged greetings as we passed.

The wind seemed to settle into the SE at 5-6 knots as we moved steadily along at 3 knots. I began to prepare the spinnaker with the boat now steered by Otto. Going forward I glanced back and Oasis had her chute up. I set the pole, opened

the bag preset on the bow, loosened the straps and went aft again. The pole guy was set, the sheet pulled out and the halyard in hand to set the spinnaker when the boat speed jumped to 5 knots as the breeze suddenly freshened. Hold it. If we get 15-20 knots again, I'll have my hands much too full. All lines loose again, I scurried back to the bow, pulled the sail back in, repacked the straps and secured all. Meanwhile, our boat speed surged to over 5 knots as I raced back to take over the helm. One thing about going downwind is that the effects of sail changes are mitigated compared to upwind changes.



Oasis with the asymmetric had to head up from a deep deep reach while Radiant Heat adjusted course for Sisters and set the jib wing on wing and went dead down wind. The wind never reached its former velocity but remained high enough to maintain good speed. I could have had the spinnaker up to good effect but as it turned out we did ok anyway. The fleet behind had struggled to round the mark and were now well back again. Oasis's angle of sail took her down to the Salt Spring shore and then she gybed back again crossing behind about the same distance as she had before, now headed to Second sisters. I focussed on the boats ahead. They were substantially closer. It seemed we were bringing the wind with us and there was little in the harbour ahead. Strands of wind ruffles on the water came and went.

Your FCR had closed to within .5nm of Muse and Minke at the mark. The wind had softened briefly, but not to what was felt by the boats ahead of us, and filled in to

about 8 to 10 for much of the upwind crossing to the mark. After, rounding the mark, the skies brightened, and we headed home.

Downwind, in the brightening skies and warming sun, and finally getting dry and warm, I shook out the reef. Remember when I said it rained hard enough to fill a bathtub? Well the bathtub emptied out of the freed up main on top of me.

The two boats had gained on me again. Minke had hoisted her spinnaker and Muse had settled in on a wing-on-wing course. I was nervous about hoisting my own spinnaker and I was doing near 6 knots deep reaching, and was catching up to Muse, and staying even with Minke, so why risk it. All I needed was a break. And I got one. I sailed into the only hole of the day by my nemesis: Batt Rock. - FCR

Back to Tony...

Oasis gybed to the West, left side of the harbour, as Radiant Heat went wing on wing down the centre right. She was getting a three quarter knot current assist. Holes were appearing. The lead boats were very slow . We continued, Oasis had a collapsed chute and finally took it down. She fell aft.

Soul Thyme was on the West side beginning to move again. Sorcery X on the right side also moved to the finish line. Radiant Heat stayed in the centre and came closer yet. Oasis was dead in the water further aft.

The wind reached Sorcery X, and Soul Thyme and That's Life, and they were over shortly followed by Radiant Heat and some time later by Oasis. (That's Life scored a DNF only because, being new, he hadn't recorded his finish time - FCR)
It was a grand race and how the results will be after the adjusted times we will see. It was yet another great wind as we spread our wings to dispel the constrictions of Covid 19 in a healthy fashion beneficial for all.

An Opening Day to Remember! And a huge shout out to first time winner: Muse. Damian will soon be joining us as an Associate Member. (*Damian can thank Paul for his rating after Damian showed up last race with a dinghy on the foredeck of his new to him boat. Good strategy Damian -FCR*)





Club			Finish	Corrected		Rating for	club
Rating	Boat	Skipper	Time	Time	Place	Next Race	points
324	MUSE	Sorochynski	14:27:07	03:02:37	0	324	
147	SOUL THYME	Simpson	13:40:45	03:05:53	1	147	100
253	SECOND WIND	van Soeren	14:13:10	03:07:39	2	253	92
138	RADIANT HEAT	Brogan	13:41:33	03:09:13	3	138	83
164	OASIS	Jones	13:49:40	03:09:45	4	164	75
193	EVANGELINE	Sutton	13:59:05	03:10:37	5	193	67
322	SKEENA CLOUD	Taylor	14:38:41	03:11:59	6	322	58
255	MINKE	Meek	14:20:15	03:13:07	7	255	50
65	SORCERY X	Slakov	13:33:39	03:24:03	8	65	42
0	THAT'S LIIFE	McAllister	dnf		9	0	8
250	DERYN MOR	Vine	dnf		9	250	8
200	KAY D	Herbert	dnf		9	200	8
171	RAMPART	DeRoos	dnf		9	171	8