

Challenge the Current K Race: June 28, 2020

Written by Tony Brogan and Greg Taylor

Pictures by Lisa Lipsett, Bob Jones, Jan, Macpherson, Heather Sloat, and Peter Toby

The Keeners were out today, looping it up in Captains Passage

The wind forecast did not disappoint, even if the 1500 hrs wind switch from NE to SE came 2 hours earlier than expected, at 1300 hrs.

Arriving at the dock white caps were observed from the 12-15 knot fresh northerly. It is unusual to get white caps from that direction but it determined setting the 115 jib and having the spinnaker as the only other sail on deck. It even looked like enough wind to wonder about not flying the spinnaker at all.

A quick roll call was taken, the complicated course announced three times, and we made out to the water. Initially we reefed the main but decided to shake it out again. The jib and the full main can easily handle 20 knots of wind.

With 25 minutes to the start we did a couple of practice runs through the start-line to see how the wind laid and found it anywhere from the port quarter to the port beam but once switching to dead down wind and had a visit to the starboard quarter. We decided to start with the jib and see how the wind settled before trying a spinnaker.

With 4 minutes left we turned toward Grace Point and with 90 seconds to go reversed course to the line.

Being on a Port tack we had to beware the Starboard hand boat but seeing none close we found we were blanketed by That's Life on the windward side. We had speed enough to pass but then the wind shadow clawed us back.

Oasis a little ahead, to our lee, was making good time. We eased over to edge away from That's Life but she still shadowed us and so hardening up we came up under her stern and moved to her windward side and the center of the channel.

Skeena Cloud had a good start and we caught her and passed her too employing a little convivial chit chat while we were close enough.

Pturbodactyl was fast out of the blocks, leaving the fleet to their own devices. She was far enough ahead to occasionally be recognized but not easily seen again for an easy line honours finish.

In the meantime Oasis, That's Life and Radiant Heat all hoisted spinnakers. and vied for the passing of Batt Rock. Deep Reaching Radiant Heat made a direct line for BR. Oasis footed off a little with the Asymmetric still giving a good course as did That's Life.

Opting for the safety tactic of an earlier takes down of the spinnaker Radiant Heat gave up some distance but by the time the other two boat hardened up under head sail close to the mark Radiant Heat was close enough to find room between That's Life and the buoy and set a close hauled course to U62 to find herself in the wind shadow of Oasis just ahead.

RH tacked out to the left into clear air again and after a suitable time tacked back. Despite the current sweeping across from left to right we found we had a close hauled course to U62. That's Life and Oasis battled on but were swept down away from the mark and had to tack back 200 yards to make the rounding. As we we saw they had both gained as they crossed 100 yards ahead

We now turned to Horda Shoals after overstanding the mark as we thought we needed room to allow for the current but to our surprise both other boats made the mark with That's Life around ahead of Oasis who had to make a last second double tack. Radiant Heat was now 200 yard back deferring to boat water length speed.

After the turn to Channel Islands it was a little different. We were the first up with the spinnaker and drew closer. The asymmetric chutes on the other boats could not take advantage of the occasional deep, deep reach as they had to head up to keep the sail full. We slowly crept ahead, the air was lighter but we were ahead of them rounding the Island and firming up to head for Deep Ridge buoy.

We did an early drop and on a beam reach with the jib and main we headed for buoy, chased by the two still flying spinnakers. Rounding Deep ridge we hardened on a close haul course to the Prevost shore. Hopefully we could avoid some adverse current. We short tacked the shore to finally make the mark. Oasis and That's Life both took longer tacks and suffered for it. They fell behind.

(All this time we were aware of other boats trailing behind and making progress but unfortunately I did not identify or study the other boats. Comments from other skippers are welcome.)

Okay Tony, you asked for it....

The four boats at the back of the fleet Battle Axe, Kay D, Phoenix, and Skeena Cloud all had fine, if sometimes challenging races. Kay D had a good run down the harbour under spinnaker. At one point she looked, and sounded like, she was no so much sailing through, but skimming above, the water. Kay D appeared to be way up near the leaders until the Channel Islands so I lost track of her for sometime.

Battle Axe and Skeena Cloud had their own race from near Batt Rock to around Horda Shoals. Jim was kind enough not to say anything as Skeena Cloud made a panicked tack to avoid impaling herself on U62. As a person who made his living thinking about tides and fish, you would think I would know better. Or it may just prove I have the mind of a fish when it comes to tides. Once the three of us – Phoenix, Battle Axe, and Skeena Cloud – rounded Horda Shoals we hoisted spinnakers and had a grand run down to the Channel Islands. Skeena Cloud could see the rest of the fleet appeared a bit stalled there and thought, for a brief, hopeful, and foolish minute, that she had a chance to catch them. But I soon saw them – one by one - rounding the islands and making fast time towards Deep Ridge Buoy and then on to U60. Even at that, SC had a good rounding of the islands, a clean furl of the spinnaker outside of the genoa, followed by a tight rounding of the buoy. I could see the other boats struggling a bit at U60 so I thought maybe I still had a chance to make it three in a row (wins, that is, on corrected time). But then came the forecast wind change. The boats rounding U60 ahead of me caught the last of the NW and took off towards home.

Skeena Cloud found U60 sorely in need of paint as she closely examined it from the south, from the south east, from the southwest, from the northeast, and from the west. Every direction other than from the northwest. Me, and the remains of some old logging show. Lolling around the buoy, watched by a bemused cormorant.

Upon finally getting past U60, I crawled up the Prevost Shore against the current, barely missing the kelp Tony mentions, and skimming Glenthorne Point. Having time to finally look around I noted Battle Axe and Phoenix well to my stern caught in the same vexing currents and shifting winds. And opposite me, way over on the Salt Spring Shore was Kay D. How she got there I have no idea. Martin reports similar conditions on his side, *"I had the lovely Simone Cazabon as crew and she flew an excellent spinnaker and we had a lot of fun. Going backwards past Beddis beach for the third time at*

.8 knots was not the highlight of our race but it did make a relaxing, if over long, lunch break. It must be summer as we forgot our sunscreen and have red noses to show for it.

Approaching Owl Island what breeze I had began an erratic shift northwest, then west, and finally onto the beam. I decided to hoist the spinnaker, thinking there was little to lose. Turning around to how my colleagues were faring, I was shocked to see them under drawing spinnakers, caught up in a line of dark water advancing up the channel.

I ghosted along for awhile, warily watching Battle Axe, followed by Phoenix, bearing down on me. I was worried by Battle Axe, when the Green Hornet is close enough to be in my rear view mirror, I am in trouble. Meanwhile Kay D too had hoisted her spinnaker.

We all enjoyed a wonderful spinnaker run to the finish line. Mine marred only by a terrible gybe right in front of Kay D. It seems no how hard you pull on the wrong sheet things don't improve. Who knew?

Back to Tony....

Finally rounding U60 I noticed that our course took us in less than 30 feet of water and just three boat lengths away was an ominous clump of kelp floating on the surface the roots of which may well be attached to some waiting rocks.

We decided to take the long tack across and Oasis made the better decision to short tack the Prevost shore. As we progressed the wind grew lighter and we opted to hoist the 155 genoa hauled up from the bowels of the boat.

This gave us a little extra speed and as we passed Batt rock and then the stern of the freighter. Oasis was advantaged and now ahead. Boats behind were well back and we saw no challenge. We were lifted along the Saltspring shore and welcomed the countercurrent now helping. We were closer to Oasis who now hit a wind change hole just past 2nd sisters.

We hit the hole and slowed as Oasis escaped out the other side. Then galloping toward us came Second Wind happily watched us wallow as she swallowed up the distance between us.

It was puff and hole, puff and hole to the finish line, and eventually we were over ten minutes behind Oasis and a few moments ahead of Second Wind.

It was not long after that that the wind came around from East to South East resulting in most of the later boats having a grand spinnaker run home to the finish.

The Keeners all had a grand day. Kay D started the race in gust to 18, prevailed on surmounting all the challenges and came in under Spinnaker just after Skeena Cloud looking impressive and blue suited. Battle Axe came in at speed while showing the colours.

It is hard to beat, sunshine, warmth, a feisty breeze and a fleet taking advantage of it all. Just take a look at the pictures of Phoenix's crew to see the joy we all felt.

You will note from the results that I decided (with Paul's encouragement) to adjust the ratings after every race – including 'K' races - to speed the adjustment process.



Good start by Skeena Cloud

I love this shot as it captures the diversity of our fleet



I am unsure who was brave enough to snap this picture

That's Life indeed



Club	Boat	Skipper	Finish Time	Corrected Time	Place	Rating for Next Race	club points
256	SECOND WIND	van Soeren	13:50:19	03:12:55	1	241	100
164	OASIS	Jones	13:37:32	03:26:43	2	152	90
30	PTURBODACTYL	Tulip	13:01:10	03:34:06	3	21	80
201	RAMPART	DeRoos	14:01:41	03:37:53	4	195	70
126	RADIANT HEAT	Brogan	13:47:48	03:49:13	5	123	60
145	THAT'S LIFE	McAllister	13:58:30	03:53:07	6	148	50
363	PHOENIX	Lipsett	15:18:35	03:54:31	7	369	40
307	SKEENA CLOUD	Taylor	14:58:38	03:54:43	8	316	30
294	BATTLE AXE	Raddysh	15:08:55	04:06:41	9	306	20
212	KAY D	Herbert	15:00:45	04:27:04	10	227	10

Oasis on the hunt below. Above, the dreaded 'Green Hornet' at least from SC's perspective



