

Portland-Moresby Race: June 14th

Written by Tony Brogan with help from Paul Faget and Eric vanSoeren

Pictures by Bob Jones and Greg Taylor

The weekend forecast for the wind on the light side and we wondered whether the race would be run or postponed, but the forecast improved and by race day the forecast was moderate winds of 5-10 knots with gusts in the afternoon to 15 -20: maybe!

As it turned out, the wind turned on then off and then returned with a robustness that left a lasting impression on the crews of many boats. There was a double digit turnout which is the fifth time in succession!

After the roll call the race instructions we were left to contemplate what sails to rig for the ride. The wind was westerly and blowing 5-12 knots and so we decided on the 115% jib with the 135% rigged and ready to use.

In the pre start sailing there was good breeze and with the jib set we cruised back and forth and eyed the fleet doing likewise. At one point we were treated to That's Life doing 7 knots across our bow as she disappeared toward Grace Point! Others were doing shorter sallies near the line, experimenting with timed approaches for what looked like a beam reach starboard hand start.

We took a deep run down to Grace Point and turned back to the line with 3 minutes to go. We had a good course to the outer half of the line and was afforded the luxury of luffing up a little if we were early by 15-20 seconds. We moved over to the center of the line and then dipped to the line as the clock counted to zero. Boats were spread across the line and all over in good time. Imp and Ogopogo were up front on the left and Radiant Heat nudging forward as the wind came and went in fits and starts.

The wind grew lighter and the fleet spread out as we passed by Second Sisters and then a hole opened and completely swallowed Radiant Heat. We wallowed and fretted as the wind went this way or that. First to port, then to starboard, then on the nose, and then astern.

Ogopogo escaped toward Welbury. Caliente on the other side, slid off toward Batt Rock the fleet behind came up and passed. Finally, after a half hour or so, we caught the breeze, and headed out toward Captains Passage. Meanwhile Ogopogo, followed by others at a distance, including Kay-D, were seen on the horizon, halfway down the Prevost shore in a building breeze.

From here on we were distant viewers of most of the fleet as we took the long tack out to the Prevost shore. Oasis could be seen ahead closer to the Salt spring side.

It was out here we caught up with Battle Axe who was sailing a little slower and deeper. As we approached the Prevost shore we were both a little ahead and to the lee of Battle

Axe. Tacking from the shore we realized that we needed to duck Battle Axe and bore off to do so. But the wind had other ideas, and even though we had a reef in the main, a gust of wind, now on a reach, overcame the rudder. We were abruptly and unexpectedly rounded up and heading straight towards Battle Axe's midships.

Throwing the helm hard over to complete the turn, we were suddenly parallel to Battle Axe a boats length away, with our jib loose, flying flag-like in the wind. Battle Axe passed us. We took a deep breath, gathered in the sheets, tacked again, and set out for the Channel Islands.

Jim may have another viewpoint of this, but a collision was averted, and all ended well. All this in 10-20 seconds.

At Channel Islands we tacked out to the left until well clear and then set course to clear Beaver Point. Oasis and others were approaching Beaver Point closer to the shore. Battle Axe was now well astern but sailing well.

The wind suddenly went 30 degrees to the south, and we were now headed to Yeo Point rather than Beaver point, and so soon tacked out again.

The wind angle now determined that a port hand rounding was favoured to round the Portland Moresby Islands. Second Wind now appeared on our limited radar as she trailed us to leeward as we trailed Oasis and others. We held a close hauled course to clear Portland and slowly we conceded distance to the bigger boats both fore and aft of us.

The wind was now 12-18 knots apparent. Oasis et al were further ahead and Second Wind closer. As we eyed the turn to clear the Celia Reef mark we tacked ahead of Second Wind but then the choppy water and the stronger wind played a hand. The genoa stowed on the port side was sucked overboard by an errant wave. Caught by the wind it was dragged still further outboard.

There was nothing to do but to tack to lift the port side out of the water and allow gallant crew, John, to retrieve the sail. By the time this was done and we tacked back on course Second Wind was several hundred yards ahead.

But it seems once was not enough. The genoa, caught by yet another wave, ended up back in the water. Water over the deck is not to be denied and so another tack was required. This this time the sail was detached of lines and halyard and stowed, in a wet bundle, down below.

By the time we got back on course after the second retrieval, we were a quarter to a half a mile behind Second Wind who was clearing Fairfax Point. Radiant Heat was far enough out that we had to bear off some to avoid Imre island before we too were rounding Fairfax.

It was here the seas got worse and the wind the strongest, peaking at a good 20+ knots. (Read Eric's story of how some of his crew paid tribute to Neptune at this point). What caused the chop I do not know. Wind against current, wave action rebounding from the rocky shore, or all of the above?

It was enough to throw us around like a cork. Boat directions changed by 20-30 degrees in a second. Still under reefed main and jib, the wind now went aft. We were on a deep reach but the chop would not allow an easy head sail set which filled and flopped as we were driven by the main.

Now we could see no one behind us and many boats ahead in the distance. The wind was steadier and we flew wing on wing now and if we could hold it. The wind went to the port side and we needed a gybe to give us the course needed. A chicken gybe was the call and we made a circle to set the boom on the other side. Now we picked up speed, the chop was less and we set the spinnaker while crossing Moresby Passage.

(Radiant Heat made it across but one of the racers ahead of him was beating out that old Sufaris tune: Wipe-out. Read on). The apparent wind dropped to 6 -8 knots and the boat speed was a steady 6-7knots.

We shook out the main reef and gained a half knot of boat speed.

Second wind was now a little closer as was Oasis over on the Beaver Point side. Slowly we overtook Second Wind and finally passed her by the Channel Islands. Oasis was a little closer and we could see her passing Ganges Shoals. Other boats' sails were well down into the harbour. We crossed the line minutes behind Oasis and several minutes ahead of Second wind..

It was a boisterous frustrating sail for us as the cards were dealt early on in the hole we fell into. The final times showed the fleet sailed well and the high handicap boats were rewarded with the podium appearance. I feel for the fastest boats who gained line honours and were adjusted to the back of the pack in the final placings! But congratulate those who corrected well. It was a challenging sail.

Kay D wisely retired after enjoying a good sail out to the left side of the course. She was well up in the fleet. As the wind strengthened and the wave action grew, the conditions grew difficult for a light small open boat.

I look forward to others' accounts of the fun times had on an overall fine sailing day.

See you Wednesday. Maybe we will have some wind and a longer sail this week.

Now, get ready for it, can't you just hear Paul laughing into 'WIPE-OUT':
<https://youtu.be/bpv1h3d7DQA>

I think in skiing it's called a yard sale. When you face plant so completely that every piece of gear is left spread across the slope. And because the Caliente crew witnessed it all, I better get in front of the story and report what really happened. I guess it was a little windier and a little wavier than needed for the spinnaker, but the course around the bottom end of Moresby took us dangerously close to the US border with all the Covid so April insisted on setting the spinnaker to get us out of danger as quickly as possible. I said OK, but only if she promised to get the jib down after the set because 3 sail running is too complicated. The spinnaker went up as it should. And the Ogoogo went from 10 knots to 12 as it should. But the jib wouldn't come down by itself and we don't have roller furling so to the bow goes April. Now I'm not suggesting my wife is heavy, because she's not, but when any weight shifts from the back of the boat to the front of the boat in waves and wind at speed it's kinda like burying a ski tip into a mogul and over you go. And over we went. So there we are on our side, rudder not working, sails flogging, Ole laughing, and we're slowly drifting toward the Pender Island sanctuary where boating is illegal. So we decided to drop the spinnaker into the water to see if that might slow us down a bit more. And it worked. Boat speed went from 1 knot to 0.1 knot. After 5 minutes of inching the submerged sail up from around the keel April explained to me that holding on to the tiller really wasn't effective and that maybe it would be more productive if I helped with the sail. I thought about all the times she has helped me out, so I agreed. We finally got the sail back into the boat, raised the jib so that the bow could be pointed downhill, made a law abiding jibe away from Pender, had a sandwich and beer, and when that was all done put the spinnaker back up to dry it out and track down the Red boat that got ahead by keeping their sail in the bag. – Paul Faget

And from Eric vanSoeren and crew serving up lunch to Neptune:

There definitely were some exciting times. True wind hit 20 plus knots a few times and it got a bit lumpy, but properly reefed Second Wind loves those conditions. Not so her crew. Both Huib and Nina had a few technicolor yawns, most of which at least went over the sides. Donna was a delight though and was ever so eager to learn and help. (Their family is originally from the Netherlands but has lived on the island for some years, Nina and Donna attend school here and are both very good and daring athletes, although only one, it seems, has inherited the sea faring genes of her ancestors☺) Our last run down the Harbour was exciting under spinnaker. We were hitting over 8 knots, until the chute wrapped around the forestay and would not unwrap or come down. We finally got it mostly down, but the turtle downhaul line was wrapped part way up the forestay. Part of the tangled mess was still 15 feet up the forestay, and part of the spinnaker was dragging in the water as we crossed the finish line. But other than two crew feeding the fishes, there were no injuries and no equipment damage so a great sail over all. I think my crew will come back on Wednesday when they forget the bad parts and remember the good. After all, I think that is what makes most of us keep coming back for more.

And some pictures, as Bob Jones says, of the new Queen of our fleet, looking wonderful in her finery coming down the harbour. But there must have been a palace revolt as her finery was soon shredded.



Off with her head!



Some more pictures



And you want to feel what it's like on OgoPogo with some wind in her sails? Check out our Facebook page.

Club Rating	Boat	Skipper	Finish Time	Corrected Time	Place	Rating for Next Race	club points
283	SECOND WIND	van Soeren	15:53:20	05:10:18	1	268	100
309	BATTLE AXE	Raddysh	16:37:00	05:34:48	2	297	91
150	SOUL THYME	Simpson	15:20:41	05:40:13	3	141	82
173	OASIS	Jones	15:34:24	05:41:47	4	167	73
138	IMP	Leitch	15:24:52	05:50:33	5	135	64
118	THAT'S LIFE	McAllister	15:19:49	05:56:24	6	121	55
94	CALIENTE	Andersen	15:16:25	06:06:44	7	100	45
123	RADIANT HEAT	Brogan	15:39:58	06:14:00	8	132	36
38	OGOPOGO	Faget	15:11:12	06:37:27	9	50	27
-9	PTURBODACTYL	Tulip	14:52:19	06:50:00	10	6	18
200	KAY D	Herbert	dnf		11	200	9
	SLY FOX	Lipke	dnf		11		