

Round Penders (sort-of): 2020

Report by Tony Brogan with some help from the FCR
Pictures by Sam Keating, April Faget, and Anthony Wilkinson

We worried all week whether the smoke from the US wildfires would persist and put the Round Penders race in jeopardy, but it was gone Saturday morning as we collected on our boats to prepare for the weekend sail. Four knots of wind came and went and at the skippers radio roll call the start was changed from the club dock start line to Second Sisters light .

By this time the wind had degraded to an oscillating, whispery SE as we all motored out to Sisters. In the light air the start was desultory affair with some of the nine boats a little confused as to where they should be for best results while avoiding having right of way impeded, but it all shook itself out and the fleet, in fits and starts, eased out toward Captains Passage. It was anything but an auspicious start to one of the favourite races on most SISC racer's calendars. But things were about to get better, much better.

An almost invisible wind on the left was spotted by Ogoopogo and a quick tack in that direction found them and following boats in a little freshet of wind, leaving three laggards behind.

By the time the wind filled in for the laggards the leaders were a mile ahead tacking along the Prevost shore.

We aboard Radiant Heat were aboard one of the laggards and the skipper was grinding his teeth when the wind angle forced us more across Captains passage than to following the leaders. There was not a lot of wind in Captains Passage but it looked like it was filling, so the decision was made to bear off over to the Prevost shore and James Bay on Prevost to get current relief.

We did the Great circle route around Ptubodactyl, another laggard, who at that point was stalled in the channel, going backwards at a knot or two. The third Laggard, Skeena Cloud, was not as foolish, although drawn to the Prevost shore, she tacked and followed the now out of sight fleet.

(Skeena Cloud and Second Wind were the two additional laggards. Second Wind opted for the Salt Spring shore whereas Skeena Cloud, as Tony says, went looking for what Paul Faget describes as 'the elevator'. The elevator is the strong current flowing out through Captains Pass towards Horda Shoals on an ebbing tide and then down to the Channel Islands. With the light, shifty breeze I thought the elevator may be my best chance to get to Port Browning before everyone else went to bed. But upon approaching the Prevost Shore the breeze began to strengthen from the SE. Skeena Cloud took a bone in her teeth as I trimmed her to remain on her feet (thanks Paul for the tips) under her big 155 genoa and full main. It was then we were ushered into the elevator. Now, hurtling directly at the Horda Shoals can at 7.5 knots, on the edge of control, I wondered, how is it, with all this water around, that our course has us on a collision course with this one piece of metal? Not wanting to pinch and go slower. I mean, this was likely one of the few times in Skeena Cloud's life she would sail upwind this fast. It wouldn't be fair to her. But, falling off the wind was risky, the elevator seemed to be routed through the marker, and Skeena Cloud was frisky, tossing her head into the wind, which wouldn't be such a good idea if she took it into her head to do it right next to the hunk of metal and barnacles rushing toward us. As it was, we scraped by, but close enough that I am convinced the one remaining cormorant winked at us.

Meanwhile, Second Wind, had the opposite problem, while the wind had also reached her, she was in the back eddy inside of Batt Rock, slowing her progress. But once she tacked toward Prevost, Second Wind flew.

I must stop here, and take my hat off to both Eric and Bob, who each singlehanded their 40 ft boats this past weekend in every type and direction of breeze, across wide crossings, through narrow channels, in tides and currents, and avoiding ferries. It was a fine example of sailing skill and seamanship.

I tacked across toward the Channel Islands, using the current to our advantage, crossing under Second Wind half way cross. My thought was to use the tide to our advantage, then tack back to Point Liddell, knowing that Eric had at least three tacks to my one, and that I might get to crack the sheets a bit. I thought I would escape the ebb current weeping out of the channel, and beat Eric to Point Liddell. Alas, approaching Point Liddell, Second Wind appeared from behind my genoa, clearly ahead. Damn.

We both turned the corner, cracked the sheets, and loosened the mainsheet. Eric was not far ahead and with a softening, but still good, breeze, I had a chance to make up some distance. And I did, a bit. But looking forward to Stanley Point, I could see the tops of a number of stalled sails. Soon, Eric and I found our stalls in the parking lot. – FCR)

Pturbodactyl, receiving the filling breeze, took off across Trincomali while Radiant Heat short tacked the Prevost shore and headed across the Channel toward Active Pass.

The fleet had had good wind and various sails could be seen on unidentified boats outlined against the Pender Island shore about two miles away as they were approaching Navy Channel.

RH picked up the ebb current and a good breeze and made fast time in pursuit, skimming along the Mayne Island shore we came into view of Navy Channel to find the fleet in negative current, little wind and stalled waiting for us to arrive.

They were so courteous they allowed us to wiggle through the fleet, that was spread out all over the channel, into the lead.

Now there was a huff here, and a puff there, with this boat and then that boat moving past Conconi Reef, recording their short course times before entering Plumper Sound.

(Conconi Reef was the short course and I was undecided whether I should record my time the first, second, or third time I was abeam of it – FCR)

It looked for awhile as if the short course times would be required but those smart enough to stay left in less adverse current were swept up by a building breeze. The big boats, enjoying their water line length, plus Ogopogo and Pturbodactyl, took off and once again we found ourselves lagging. It was a very pleasant sail with several tacks, 12 knot breeze, and warm sunshine, before we passed the Fane Island - Razor Point transit finish line. The freshening breeze obliged us to reduce sail so we turned to the jib.

(As Tony says, being last, I could see the faster (and let's face it, smarter, boats) catch the breeze and take off. Those few minutes put me a mile behind everyone but Oasis who also stayed right and was delayed by doing, unbeknownst to us, a 720 because he had to use his engine to avoid being swept back by the tide onto Conconi Reef.

But once we got untracked, what a fantastic sail it turned out to be. Skeena Cloud was again sailing on the edge under genoa and full main, often notching well over 6 knots. Oasis and Skeena Cloud tacked up Plumper Sound. Oasis's slowly gaining some ground. Oasis then tacked to the beach. This, I thought, is my chance. I held my tack longer, risking what Paul had warned me against,

holding out for the layline, which, he warned me, makes you vulnerable to wind shifts. I thought any shift would be to my advantage. As it was, Oasis beat me to the mark. But she struggled to get around. Meanwhile, I was able to crack the sheets a bit on my last tack and race down to the mark. It would be close. But Bob won out. I had gone a bit too far, over stood, and extended my distance. But, oh, was it fun! – FCR)



The parking lot

But soon after...



Port Browning efficiently allocated berths to a succession of boats and we were soon all tied up, stretching our limbs on the dock, cracking a beer, and bringing out our appies.



The next few hours saw congenial groups, suitably spaced, at various boat docksides, people ebbing and flowing as tall stories and lies were bantered around.



Later, many took advantage of the Pub menu for supper in groups of 2 - 4 persons. As darkness closed in most retired to an early bed.

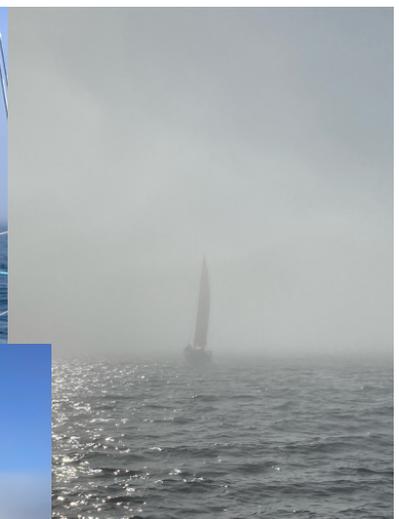
Sunday morning saw us wake early. I brewed coffee for crew Damian and rustled up a large bowl of porridge for us both. Ben, on Evangeline, graciously offered coffee to any bringing a mug and many took advantage.



Fog was heavy in the air, the wind was light from the NW and FCR declared a later start and most went to the pub for breakfast having just enough time to eat and then leave for Razor Point to start Race 2, a scheduled 18 miles around South Pender and back to Ganges.

By the time we headed out the wind turned SE and freshened to 8-12 knots. Reefs were tucked in by some. Visibility was less than 200 yards and seas were choppy. The Race start was postponed and phone calls made to get a current weather forecast.

John and Terry aboard Pturbodactyl did a great job maintaining position as Committee Boat for the start but as we reached back and forth at 5-6 knots, she was often lost in the fog. The start was



delayed again. It crossed my mind that it would be safer to be racing separated from each other than milling about like this. Then I realized that although RH had navigation lights on I do not remember on reflection if any other boat was "lit". If not we should have been!!

(As FCR, I had contacted the Race Committee members who were on the course, and asked their opinion. Most thought the fog too thick and the forecast for when and where it might clear, too uncertain, to proceed with the planned course. There are enough things to concentrate on when racing, especially single and double handed, never mind having little idea where you are, except what your plotter may tell you. But the real problem was once a boat got more than 200 feet from you, they were swallowed up by the fog. That's not much safety margin if they are converging at a combined 12 or 13 knots. For this reason we decided to instead motor back up Plumper Sound, looking for better visibility – FCR)

Finally, it was resolved that the fleet would motor back up Plumper Sound until (and if) the weather cleared, and we could then start a race home.

Skies were clearing as we approached Fane Island and suddenly the sun was shining and the traces of mist wafting away. But behind us the fog was as thick as ever. Pturbodactyl took up position and the countdown was on.

The start was downwind at plus or minus 10 knots. Ogoopogo was off, battling with raising the spinnaker (*Having been aboard Ogoopogo, it would have been April wrestling the spinnaker into submission – FCR*). Radiant Heat started well and also decided to fly our spinnaker.

The skipper, aware that this was a training experience for the crew was cautious, but all went as well as could be expected. It was more than a training experience as the spinnaker decided to wrap itself around the upper portion of the head stay even before the Jib was lowered. It was a classic figure eight but not too much in the upper half. By Releasing the halyard I hoped to release the pressure but nothing happened. "Damian, you will have to go forward and shake it out." So Damian dropped the halyard and moved to go forward when the spin suddenly dropped 10 feet. Fortunately the halyard was grabbed before we ran over the sail and the figure eight popped out . The challenge was how to de-power the sail to get it hauled up again without it fluttering and again wrapping itself around the stay. But we managed.

The restart...



(Skeena Cloud also managed to put an hour glass in her spinnaker when hit by a wind shift that swung the wind across our bow. I figured the bottom half was still pulling so decided to keep going while I decided what to do. I figured what the breeze did. It should be able to undue. I swung the bow around, back into the breeze, and the wind luckily obliged, unwrapping the spinnaker from itself. Freed, Skeena Cloud delightedly broad reached down Trincomali under spinnaker.)

We looked back and the fleet was doing just fine under head sails. We had gained little or nothing.

It was a good run down Navy Channel, passing Dinner Point on Mayne Island . Ogoopogo was gybing wide angles in front of us and now we gained and then we did not.

To our left Greg and his daughter aboard Sorcery X were making good time in the center of Trincomali. Radiant Heat left Enterprise Reef to port in the expectation of a back eddy which we found, but unfortunately, we also found less wind.

The fleet, now a little further back, followed SorceryX. Oasis was breaking away and by the time we made Ben Mohr Rock mark, she was only a boat lengths astern. Sorcery X was well ahead now but still trailing Ogoopogo.



(Skeena Cloud was not far behind Oasis. Oasis struggled with her spinnaker for a time before Ben Mohr, allowing Skeena Cloud to get close. Behind us were Shingebiss, Second Wind, and Evangeline. We earned some separation from them early in the downwind run, but they were all closing as there was a short area of lighter breeze from off the entrance to Active Pass to just before Ben Mohr, where it again increased to 10-14 knots. This, plus the current out of Active Pass meant having to gybe the spinnaker for a short fast broad reach to Ben Mohr in the building breeze, get the spinnaker furled, and set the genoa for the rounding, all in .45 of a nautical mile. It was a little

exciting. Upon rounding Ben Mohr we set for a reach across to Peile Point, still well ahead of the other boats. But once the larger boats got around, they were doing at least a knot and half faster than Skeena Cloud. They slowly, but inevitably, ate up the distance between us as we all raced through Captains Pass and then down to Second Sister and into the harbour. It was here I should have raised the spinnaker, but it was blowing hard. It was a decision which was to cost me dearly -FCR)

Oasis overtook us on the reach before Captains Passage and we followed her past Welbury and down to Sisters.

We had reset the lines and the spinnaker bag and were ready to launch again which we did just before the final turn past Second Sisters. Again, we had a figure eight problem and for a second or two wondered if we would run up on the island rather than pass gracefully by!

On our run down the harbour we may have gained a half minute or so on Oasis who was remaining under head sails. We had an uneventful takedown but still Grace Point was closer than was comfortable. If we had finished on the left side we would have been in the middle of the Squalor Bay homesteads.

The following boats were about ten minutes back so the results will be interesting to see. This weekend should raise my handicap quite nicely.

(As the other boats finally caught up to Skeena Cloud just short of the finish line, I struggled to keep much speed on. Skeena Cloud goes downwind wing-on-wing about as graceful as a pregnant duck. I had to gybe back and forth under white sails as the other boats, taking a more direct course, slowly came abeam with only .25 of a nautical mile from the finish. I then did something very foolish. I gybed toward Second Wind, thinking I could steal his wind, then gybe away for the finish into the stronger breeze near the right hand flag.. But upon coming close to Second Wind and beginning my gybe away, I looked down and saw a 15' log poking out. I had to be sliding down parallel to it, only inches away. I quickly turned back toward Second Wind which loomed over me like a battleship. I abruptly turned the wheel even harder to come in behind her only to find myself blanketed by her huge sails – set wing – on -wing. And that's all she wrote. She, and Shingebiss, finished just ahead of me within seconds of each other. Speaking of Shingebiss, it was wonderful seeing her out racing again. And doubly wonderful seeing Sam crewing after her recent back surgery. And Sam is getting keen, she told me a couple of times how much she enjoyed seeing Pturbodactyl and Ogopogo off their stern. Watch out guys.



Evangeline would have been right there with them, but I understand Ben and Anthony spent some time shrimping around Ben Mohr. Speaking of Anthony, his sailing skills are well earned, having been sailing on most of the world's oceans. His last adventure was crewing on a cat from South Africa to Grenada. – FCR)

After putting the boat to bed we wandered over to the dock table and soon were joined by other skippers and crew for a final chat and to enjoy the sunny peasant afternoon.

Overall it was a great weekend with lots of tales to tell. The other eight boats have stories of their own to tell, I am sure.

Next Sunday is the Montague Harbour race.

(Your FCR was wandering around his house feeling pretty good about his performance Sunday until Paul emailed me the results along with the pithy, “just goes to prove, anything can go downwind”. That solved the swelled head. Probably a good thing. Janice was getting a bit exasperated sharing her abode with a self-anointed sailing wunderkind. – FCR)

Saturday

Rating	Boat	Skipper	Time	Time	Place
325	SKEENA CLOUD	Taylor	13:56:12	03:24:46	1
208	SECOND WIND	van Soeren	13:37:25	03:40:54	2
172	EVANGELINE	Sutton	13:32:17	03:47:35	3
134	SHINGEBISS	Keating	13:33:49	04:02:20	4
179	OASIS	Jones	13:51:51	04:03:30	5
129	RADIANT HEAT	Brogan	13:41:15	04:11:38	6
92	SORCERY X	Slakov	13:28:12	04:12:59	7
41	OGOPOGO	Faget	13:31:35	04:39:55	8
-3	PTURBODACTYL	Tulip	13:22:43	04:52:35	9

Sunday

Club			Finish	Corrected	
Rating	Boat	Skipper	Time	Time	Place
325	SKEENA CLOUD	Taylor	13:41:08	01:48:34	1
179	OASIS	Jones	13:26:10	01:57:19	2
-3	PTURBODACTYL	Tulip	12:57:00	02:01:57	3
41	OGOPOGO	Faget	13:07:32	02:04:36	4
208	SECOND WIND	van Soeren	13:40:10	02:05:09	5
92	SORCERY X	Slakov	13:20:30	02:07:59	6
129	RADIANT HEAT	Brogan	13:29:13	02:09:25	7
172	EVANGELINE	Sutton	13:43:43	02:15:00	8
134	SHINGEBISS	Keating	13:40:11	02:19:20	9

Combined

BOAT	PLACE	POINTS	PRIZE	NEW RATING
SKEENA CLOUD	1	100	-12	313
SECOND WIND	2	89	-9	199
OASIS	3	78	-6	173
EVANGELINE	4	67	-3	169
OGOPOGO	5	56	0	41
PTURBODACTYL	6	44	+3	0
SORCERY X	7	33	+6	98
RADIANT HEAT	8	22	+9	138
SHINGEBISS	9	11	+12	146

