

Montague Harbour Race
27 September, 2020
Written by Tony Brogan

Montague Harbour is one of those places for us that is close enough to easily get to, but far enough away to engender the idea that one has been on a trip by going there. Scenic views, nice beaches and pleasant trails and a restaurant if desired.

A Montague Harbour race offers none of these things, but it is an interesting challenging course involving tides and currents and tricky variable winds and that's just getting there. While in the neighbourhood of Montague harbour all of the above is on offer in a devilish mix that leaves many a skipper in the despair of being last when the brilliant race he had thus far run, dictated that the prize, already supposedly already won, was to be snatched away.

This year winds were almost nonexistent at roll call and much the same when nine boats with their intrepid crews set forth to venture into the unknown in no great haste, drifting around the start line for 10-20 minutes. Some motored back and forth to seek the best starting point before engines had to be turned off 5 minutes before the start, but without success.

Ogopogo was at the port, pin end, and from the perspective of some appeared to be over early with 15 seconds to go and a call went out but there was no protest as nobody was on the line with the correct view point to prove anything. Having a boat having to go round the end in such conditions would, some thought, be cruel and unusual punishment. We need to organize a starting committee schedule to monitor such incidents!! (*Don't look this way - FCR*)

Nevertheless the start time arrived and everyone was pointed in the right direction when a whisper of wind appeared on the left drawing some boats forward only to abandon them minutes later. (*Well, not everyone, as evidenced by the picture below. A couple of us were pointed anywhere but the way we needed to go. Skeena Cloud finally found a zephyr on the Club end but Quench was in stuck in a glass like sea by the other flag. The zephyrs that collected up the rest of us never made it to them and they were slowly, inevitably, and frustratingly, swept into the inner harbour on the incoming tide - FCR*)

Thus we made our way down the harbour and by the time Sisters Island was passed by the first boats, the fleet had divided into two. Four up front and a gap and four boats back.

Ogopogo moved out into Captains Passage. SorceryX not so far, Radiant Heat a little less yet and Oasis closer yet to Welbury Bay. The wind was patchy and the current on a full flood. After a while the wind filled a little and we clawed our way out through the

passage getting a nice lift with the current. Nobody was able to catch Opopogo or SorceryX but RH was hanging in there.

Oasis made good time skating into Long Harbour and back out and moved into third place before coming to a relative halt and watching RH edge ahead again . This pattern remained between these two as the advantage was with one and changed to the other at least 4 times during this marathon.

The four boats, Quench, Caliente, Skeena Cloud and Sylph in the rear were closer at one point but never entered my consciousness so I defer to others as to what was happening there. We, the esteemed, one by one entered Montague Harbour with a 1-2 knt SE breath of air. Opopogo a quarter mile ahead of SorceryX who was closely followed by Oasis and Radiant Heat. I am not aware of other boats getting in or through the harbour.

(Sylph was swept up along the Salt Spring shore at the mercy of the flood tide. Skeena Cloud, after getting off a rock in Boulder Bay by swinging her boom hard over, standing on the side, and using the engine, did her required 720 and almost caught up with Radiant Heat. But the whole experience robbed me of some of my zeal to spend several more hours alone fighting with iffy breezes and erratic currents, so I quit just before entering Montague. A decision I beat myself up for later after a couple of refreshments, when things started looking a bit better. I must thank Ian for teaching me how to get oneself unstuck off a rock. It is a learned skill which I had hoped never to have to practice. But it appears I am getting good at it. - FCR)

On our way through Oasis and RH changed places twice more!

Getting passed Sphinx Island was a chore and Oasis and Radiant Heat both moved out into Trincomali. Radio calls had been heard enquiring whether we were still sailing. Some boats had retired. SorceryX was a way ahead but then we heard they had retired and were motoring in. I am not sure what happened to Opopogo, but it appeared it was us, RH, maybe Opopogo, and Oasis, left to fight it out.

During this time we heard a plaintiff wail over the radio from Oasis that "Tony never quits" and so we wallowed a little further.

It was then that we spotted a black line on the water down near Navy Channel. Could a wind be on the way. Accordingly we tacked left and abandoned Oasis to their own deliberations . We moved with the new reversed current that changed after 1500 and went with a mild ebb. Faster than I had imagined the wind line advanced to us and we now had a 200 yard advantage on Oasis and we caught the first of the breeze. Shortly the distance lengthened to close to quarter of a mile and and RH took off kicking up her heels toward Captain's Passage. Oasis was now making good time too and soon was

closer as the wind died as we approached Scott Point. It was now 1700 approximately as we headed toward the Sisters Light for the short course finish. One hour left.

We passed outside of Welbury Spar hanging in the Ebb current a little longer. Oasis only 100 yard back now passed inside Welbury Spar.

Gradually in little wind we crept toward the finish line. Oasis crept a little better than Radiant heat and with 100 yards to go passed to get the line in better time. Well done Oasis. Sorry to have forced you to enjoy a finish!

We were out for 7 hours and thanks are due to crew Damian who put in a solid day's work. There were many sail changes . 4 spinnaker packs, three wimper packs and numerous gybes. Thanks. Whoever thinks that light air sailing is an easy day on the water have never been on a Montague Harbour race.

We enjoyed the occasional sunny spells and the chats between sail sets. There was no social gathering after the race as we were so late in and so we will enjoy the Bas Cobanli Race all the more on this coming Sunday.



Club			Finish	Corrected		Rating for	club
Rating	Boat	Skipper	Time	Time	Place	Next Race	points
173	OASIS	Jones	17:27:50	06:31:54	1	170	100
138	RADIANT HEAT	Brogan	17:29:37	06:54:31	2	141	89
313	SKEENA CLOUD	Taylor	dnf		3	313	11
183	QUENCH	Sloat	dnf		3	183	11
182	SYLPH	Leitch	dnf		3	182	11
144	SOUL THYME	Simpson	dnf		3	144	11
98	SORCERY X	Slakov	dnf		3	98	11
91	CALIENTE	Andersen	dnf		3	91	11
41	OGOPOGO	Faget	dnf		3	41	11