



February 2018

24 HOUR RACE

Unlike 2017, three practise races were planned for the 2018 year 24 hour Endurance Race.

The first to be held was on the evening of 27 January in the balmy conditions that Wellington had enjoyed since the previous November – hot and calm. It was not the best conditions for yacht racing but it was pleasant enough to attract 7 yachts; four keelers and three trailer sailors.

The start time was at 2030 with a simple course from the start box to Petone wharf return to the start and then down to the outer harbour beacon. With ten knots of wind the nine miles could be easily covered in two hours. There was not ten knots of wind. There was a slight ruffle on the water, able to make all of the yachts move but not at normal speed.

The pre race manoeuvres consisted of staying on the south side of the line once the preparatory signal had been sounded. There were tense moments as the small light weight machines glided around the large heavier boats but at the start all of the yachts were pointing in the right direction and near the line. Chickadee could probably claim to be first over the line but was close to the start box, barely moving and the water around her was glassy. Freedom was at the pin end, next over the line, in clear air and with positive movement, albeit slow as befits a boat of her considerable weight. Then came Madness and White Heat demonstrating how easily a light boat can use even the smallest draught. They hoisted spinnakers and set off on a broad downwind tack.

The course to buoy 19 was easy sailing. Freedom and Pulse both pointed directly to the mark. For Pulse that might have worked better on the windward side of Freedom as every time there was a puff of wind to make the Noalex 25 accelerate they would encounter the wind shadow from Freedom's lofty rig. The rest of the fleet did two long downwind tacks and sailed extra distance. It could have been advantageous to

Madness and White Heat but the rest arrived at the buoy at the same time as Freedom and Pulse. By then it was 2140, very dark and there had been considerable trouble finding the buoy. Reliance on guidance from above (GPS) worked. The expectation of some crews had been that there would be a light on the buoy. No doubt the race administration had felt that the fleet would be around the buoy well before dark.

Once around the buoy there was the hope of some speed as the boats would be close hauled and that would increase the apparent wind speed. Reality was positive movement for twelve minutes covering 36 metres back towards the start line and then the wind vanished. For the next 40 minutes Freedom stayed in the same spot but rarely was the bow pointing in the right direction. None of the other yachts fared better and the race was abandoned.



The next practise race was to be on the evening of 17 February but weather and lack of boats prevented action.

AM MEER ON THE NELSON CIRCUIT AGAIN

Katie Mathison

We have always described the Nelson race as a race of three halves – The South Coast, Cook Strait to Stephens Island, and Tasman Bay. This year's race broke that mould.

There was nothing threatening in the forecast when we got up on Friday morning, despite a range of different conditions being forecast during the week prior. The forecast was indicating light winds in the harbour, a 20 knot Northerly in the strait during the night, and a variable breeze in the

Tasman on the Saturday. Our biggest concern was not too much wind, but rather, a lack of wind.

The race was the last real chance to test the sail configuration Geoff is planning on using for the Solo Tasman in April. He was therefore hoping for testing conditions, but the crew was happy with the benign conditions that were forecast. The sail plan meant that all of the sail changes would be done from the cockpit, which also delighted the crew. We had a No 2, which could be furled to a 3, and a staysail - which was really a No 4 - which could be furled to a storm jib. Seaview Sails had supplied both.

At 6.00 Friday evening, we crossed the start line mid-fleet and enjoyed a great spinnaker run out of the harbour, still in touch with a couple of boats as we rounded Barretts Buoy. But the best part was unfurling the staysail for a three-sail reach across Island Bay to draw up alongside Prime Mover as we headed for the rip. Jet dropped off astern when she went headless to change her headsail and we could see the rest of the fleet not far ahead. We were enjoying being so close to the other boats. This didn't last as we changed direction and went hard on the wind to cross the Strait. We slowly fell behind the faster boats and settled into our night routine as darkness fell.

Although it was a clear sky with a canopy of bright stars, there was no moon and it was pitch black. It was a long beat towards the Brothers and we could see Prime Mover and Jet tack out and head up the Strait. The on-watch crew decided that the boost we would get from the tide by going inside the Brothers meant that the risk of doing this might just pay off. In the pitch black, this was going to be a scary manoeuvre.

The cliffs of Cape Koamaru loomed above us, and the Southern island of the Brothers seemed right alongside. In the dark, it appeared so close that we couldn't even start to think about tacking to head North through the gap. The chartplotter suggested we still had plenty of room, but everything closes in when it is pitch black and the gap between the Brothers and the Cape appeared impossible to navigate without numerous tacks. Constantly checking the chartplotter, we talked ourselves in to believing we still had room; we held on. Our only guide was the light on the Northern end of the Brothers. When it really felt like we really could go no further, we tacked.

What a great relief that was. We were pointing North and were clearly going to miss the light and were now moving slightly away from the cliffs. Once we left the gap from behind the Brothers we could see the navigation lights of Prime Mover and Jet in the distance, to the North and East of us. At this stage we were doing 7.5 knots. We were hard on the wind and clearly getting the hoped-for assistance from the tide. The risk

had paid off and we were going to be ahead of the other two when they tacked.

About 3.00 in the morning we were closing on Stephens Island. We were headed North on a port tack to get above Stephens and we could see Jet on a starboard tack closing fast on our starboard side. We watched the navigation lights of Jet go from red to green then finally white, behind us. Wahoo, the stress at the Brothers had paid off.

Dawn arrived in the way it can, only at sea. The sky slowly turns to rust and lightens until the “big yella” finally appears on the Eastern horizon and chases the stars from the sky. Then suddenly it is daylight and we could see Stephens in all of its stark remoteness with steep unrelenting cliffs and turbulent water crashing against its base. Prime Mover was just ahead and Jet was still behind as the three of us formed a convoy leaving the island to port. The wind was about 20 knots, albeit on the nose, and we were enjoying the sailing.

Until we hit the rip around Stephens. This was worse than Karori. Steep, broken seas that tossed Am Meer around with contempt and slowed us to below 5 knots at times. At one point some of the off-watch crew came up to see how much fun the other watch was having. Having been assured that it was no fun at all, they went back to bed, but couldn't sleep in the tossing, twisting and banging conditions.

Finally, we were around Stephens and found ourselves tacking again, and again, away from the rocks of D'Urville Island. We had rounded Stephens in a Nor'wester, only to find that the wind had moved to the South and we continued to beat as we fought for every mile towards Nelson.

The wind gradually dropped as we headed down Tasman Bay. The sun came out and it was stiflingly hot as the wind slowly veered behind and dropped. Eventually, the spinnaker went up and we were running towards the finish as the sea breeze kicked in. Jet slowly passed us a few hundred metres to our starboard as we closed on Nelson. We crossed the finish line 22 hours 44 minutes after we started from Wellington.

Our best time for the race is just over 18 hours, and our worst (our first) was 28 hours. Despite the conditions, this had been quite a quick trip. We were hard on the wind all the way except for the last 10 miles. At one stage in Cook Strait we put a reef in the main, but that lasted only an hour. Apart from that we had a full main and a No 2 all of the way. It doesn't come much better than that.

We attended the dinner and prize giving at the club on Saturday evening, then headed back to Am Meer for a couple of ports to finish off. The

crew decided to remain with the boat and sail back to Wellington. About 9.00 Sunday morning we left Nelson and motored back up Tasman Bay to French Pass in hot, sunny, airless conditions. We had a fishing line trailing behind for miles, and were just about to pull this in as we headed towards the pass, when our fisher person noticed that we had just hooked something. A valiant effort with lots of encouraging advice: “don’t let it go”, finally resulted in our landing a massive kingfish.

Landing the fish is only the start. We had to kill it in the cockpit, as the back step was taken up with the life raft. The blood splashed everywhere, and there was a lot of it. It was a challenge to get everything in order as we closed on French Pass. We had the last of the tide with us as we went through, but it was still a maelstrom of whirlpools and eddies which tossed the boat around like a leaf. Lots of photos were taken, but they never seem to do justice to the sea.

Once through, the sails went up and we had a very pleasant beat up to Clay Point where we cracked the sheets for a fantastic reach across the top of Pelorus. We had planned on staying overnight somewhere around the top of the sound, but decided to enjoy the conditions and keep going.

The tides were completely wrong to continue to Wellington, so we headed down Queen Charlotte. We picked up the mooring in Ship Cove in daylight and settled down to enjoy a very pleasant evening with fresh kingfish for dinner and a wine, or two.

The next morning, we motored across to Motuara Island where the crew went ashore to see the birds and sights. A quick swim and hot freshwater shower on the back of the boat and just after midday we headed towards Cape Koamaru under sail. We rounded the cape in a 15 – 20 knot Northerly and had a fantastic reach across and down Cook Strait, with a benign sea and a tide in our favour. We accelerated off the back of every wave and made rapid progress across the Strait. The Skipper had noted that the wind would rise through the wind factory to about 35 knots, but ignored his own advice. As we closed on the rip we put one reef in, and our speed increased to 11.3 knots over the ground as the wind built. The boat was leaping off the waves excitedly, appearing to be having as much fun as the skipper, while most of the crew slept downstairs.

Just after Sinclair, many of the crew started appearing in the cockpit as the increasingly violent movement of the boat drew attention to the Skipper’s delight in the conditions. The Skipper was relieved of the helm, the second reef was installed, the No 2 furled and the staysail deployed. With a more sedate motion, we enjoyed a tight reach across to Chaffers Passage where we cancelled our trip report, four hours after leaving Motuara Island.

The Nelson race is a challenge. It is 120 nm, normally with a wide range of conditions. It can be 35-40 knots on the South Coast, and a drifter at Stephens or the Boulder Bank, or the other way around. This year was unusual in that we had fairly constant conditions for much of the race. This was not actually to our advantage. We often gain when the faster boats get to Tasman Bay and stall, running out of wind until the sea breeze kicks in during the afternoon. We have often brought the sea breeze down from the North and closed on the rest of the fleet. That didn't happen this year which made our 6th on handicap in a fleet of 11 boats not our best, but quite respectable.

The trip back is always an extra bonus, and an important part of the race. It is always such a pleasure to sail back with a group of close friends who enjoy sailing, fishing and wine. Sailing just doesn't get much better.

SPONSOR SPECIAL

Theo Mueller



On Thursday 15 February, the LBYC Executive hosted the sponsors to the 24-Hour Endurance Yacht Race at the club for a special evening as a show our appreciation for their support. While not all sponsors were present, it was a very successful evening. Sponsors were treated to complimentary drinks and a wonderful buffet dinner, especially prepared for the occasion by Graeme, our loyal caterer. For openers we showed the video of last year's race, followed by a brief PowerPoint presentation by VC Brent Porter and Race Officer Ray Manning.

Events like the 24-Hour Endurance Yacht Race are not possible without the support of sponsors. It is very encouraging to know that almost all sponsors of last year's race were keen to be on board with us again for this year's race and we even got three new sponsors supporting us.

By the time you read this, it will only be just over a week before the canon will signal the start of this year's 24-Hour Endurance Yacht Race. Bring it on!

There is still time for the final preparations. Checking navigation lights, VHF radios. Last year the Sailing Committee recommended that you have two VHF radios - one in the cabin and a hand-held for in the cockpit. The Race Officer wants to be able to communicate with you. Also, do you have the 21st of February in your diary for the skippers

briefing and registration at LBYC's clubhouse. Check the website for details.

Do you need more crew? Do you need a boat to crew on? Put your name down on LBYC's website.

Laura Dekker and the 24-Hour Endurance Yacht Race

I have just been reading Laura's book, *One Girl, One Dream*, for the second time. I couldn't put it down. What a story!! She fought the Dutch child protection authorities through the courts six times before they let her go on her solo circumnavigation of the world. Laura was 14 years of age when she set off from Gibraltar at the southern tip of Spain. The youngest person ever to start a solo circumnavigation of the world. It took her two years with stops in all sorts of interesting places. She completed her journey in Saint Martin in the Caribbean. Several months later, Laura set off again, this time not back to The Netherlands, but to her country of birth, New Zealand. She now lives in Whangarei on her beloved 40ft yacht *Guppy*.



Laura has a huge story to tell and she is looking forward to visiting LBYC on Friday 2 March and meeting you all. She will even bring a few copies of her book along for you to purchase and she would be very happy to adorn your copy with a personal message for you. Make sure to get to the club by 18.00 to get a good seat or possie - you don't want to miss this unique opportunity.

If time allows, Laura will fire the canon at 12 noon on Saturday the 3rd of March for the start of the second 24-Hour Endurance Yacht Race.