

TW3/2011 (Swallows at Points Week)

The racing

On Tuesday night it seemed that nothing would break the duopoly of Gwaihir (with a hat-trick of firsts) and Swift (ditto but seconds). It was a two horse race. So why did it go to the wire?

In the beginning: Monday was a clash of the titans, a match race extraordinaire between Gwaihir and Swift with the latter overlapped (but necessarily to leeward) at the finish after more than 2 hours of bewitching attack and defence with the rest of the fleet mere onlookers. The best view was from Archon in 3rd, staging a good recovery. It doesn't happen often but Buccaneer and Darter dead-heated to share 6th place after Marengo rolled the pair at the last.

Now fast forward to the end: It's a trilemma - Gwaihir needs to finish 4th or better, Swift needs to win with Gwaihir lower than x-y, Marengo needs to win with the others drying out on Stocker bank *etc.*! These three boats were la crème de la flotte – even if Marengo was somewhat of a Jeanne come lately. Then Skua does a blinder in the breezy finale, a tack south just as the tide was turning when such a move might have been seen as hari-kiri but they come out in springtime blossom. The beam on Lavinia's face told it all. Gwaihir was however playing a safe strategic game, comfortable in second, probably with superior speed, but not needing to attack or provoke, but oh so close at the finish. Job done.

So what happened in between? The wind, and the two leaders, wobbled a bit – from the 'wrong' end of the line Darter and Whimbrel looked assured of the podium in Wednesday's interesting game of snakes and ladders but first Migrant and then Buccaneer had different ideas. Kansu was in imperious form in Thursday's opener (the new spinnaker?) despite Darter nosing ahead temporarily just before Calvert. Swift went left from Treloar skirting Pilsey in the ebb to gain a critical 4 places in R2 on Thursday. They rapidly closed on the finish at Peacock to the despair of the goons who had followed each other round E Head like headless chickens (one of which was Marengo!). Gwaihir was struggling.

However they only once surrendered their overall lead but Swift had narrowed the 'with discard' gap on Wednesday when they got a 5th to Gwaihir's 13th. Game on! Swift kept their challenge up with a brace of 4ths on Thursday (what consistency!) to Gwaihir's pair of 6ths. It was all to play for on Friday. And thus it came to pass

Results

1st Gwaihir (Mike Wigmore, Mark & Rachael Struckett, Charles Hyatt) MOCRA – 17 points

2nd Swift (Jon Perry, Peter Brazier and Robert Laird) RYS 19

3rd Marengo (Carolyn Brigg, Sue Glover and Christine Graves) BSC 23

4th Darter (Tony Glover, Richard and Linda Jackson, Sarah Varvill) CCRC – 32.5

5th Buccaneer (Mike, Bettine and Jonathan Bond, Steve Hammett) WWSC 38

Brass Tacks

- Loved the first course on Tuesday (**YO 2 the High Life**) – how do *you* remember the courses?
- The black flag – a badge of honour or shame? We were very well behaved after Roger could only get the numbers of the (very few) boats that *weren't* over the line at the first attempt in R2 on Thursday.

- Leading Ladies (that is first across the line in the victorious boat): Christine on Thursday in R2 (when Marengo finally re-emerged as a serious contender) and Lavinia on Friday (when ex-Olympic FD sailor Roger Yeoman helmed Skua to victory in the breeziest race of the week).
- Plus ca change? The metronomic consistency of the Gwaihir/Swift duo in placing 1st and 2nd in all three races on Monday and Tuesday was first broken by Buccaneer and then by Kansu, Marengo and Skua.
- Omega to Alpha: Mike Clarke sailed on Avocet on Wednesday and (there is no other way of saying it concisely or diplomatically), finished last, and on Kansu the very next day - and finished first.
- Whimbrel is the arriviste – after 30 years!
- Our thanks to the PW social team of Anne Colbourne, Claire Blevins, Liz Fox and Sarah Varvill, and of course to Nigel and Chloe Glennie. The Monday cocktail gathering at Bohun Lodge (built for the very purpose by James's father) and with James and Elspeth clearly enjoying their host role brought us all together with a magnificent variety of superior canapés washed down with copious quantities of Majestic's best. Tuesday was the acclaimed 'She loves you' at the Minerva, Wednesday the games and lavish cream teas at the Old Rec followed by the inspired home-spun pique-nique a la francaise chez Glennie, some enjoyed the lavish XOD centenary dinner on Thursday and we finished with a Club BBQ on Friday. Stamina essential, it was as ever a wonderful prop for a great week's sailing. Or was it the other way around?
- Having difficulties sourcing your boat-numbered sailing clothes? No problem: standard issue:-
 - 3 Joules or Hackett
 - 7 Gieves & Hawkes (who else?)
 - 60 Primark (Ali G knows but can't get Peter inside)
 - 64 Musto (boys are you too reticent?)
 - 73 Matalan
 - 86 Tommy Hilfiger (for the trimmer figure)
 - 88 Fat Face
 - 93 Crew Clothing Co.
- How much longer can we rely on the superior PW race management of Roger Wickens and his team? For eternity we might hope. Excellent courses, prompt b2b races and not even a sighting of the Mirrors that had threatened hell and damnation if they so much as glimpsed a keelboat.
- Fascinating – the start of Thursday's second race near Pivot was one of the very few opportunities for a neutral tide start (but Gwaihir was first to the windward mark yet again).
- It needs to be said that average Swallow PW participants after the Bank Holiday were down by 33% on last year. Nothing will detract from the excellent racing we enjoyed but clearly this experiment/force majeure arrangement did not appeal universally. Too early, half-term issues, too close to the Nationals, too many others about? So have you already voted for your preference in 2012? You should have by now.
- A shared prize-giving (the stiff northerly wind blew the words away anyway) denies us the opportunity for 'fun' prizes. The short-listed nominations were: Swift – for taking their spinnaker down in preparation for rounding the wrong mark, Kansu for the most effective (!) starboard hail, Team Old Rec for their sartorial elegance at the pique-nique, Elizabeth P for her divine guidance of Archon in R1 on Thursday morning (it ran out later on) and PRO Roger W for setting the longest change of course in living memory.

