

Royal Yacht Club de Belgique Plate 1-2 May 2010

Take 3 girls, add cold water and spice

What a journey from the benign conditions of Saturday morning to the demolition derby of Sunday afternoon, charted throughout by Carol Thompson's couture sailing outfits that concluded with a full dry suit and balaclava. We had it all.

R1: In light winds and from a crowded line close to the Fairway buoy *Darter* popped out from the pin end, hooked into a left hand shift and lead until *Marengo* took advantage of their caution and a few tidal errors to sweep past at Thorney and into a comfortable lead. *Buccaneer* having also been *Marengo*-ed pulled back to finish 2nd.

R2: In a now decent breeze and with almost balletic synergy both *Skua* and *Spectre*, having made the best starts from the pin end at the Park start, promptly went hard aground on the Itchenor side whilst endeavouring to max out their gain. *Marengo* was quickly in gear and was never to be headed despite a charge through the fleet by the vastly experienced *Swift* team who were ultimately thwarted by *Marengo*'s text-book covering on the final beat. The successive cold and heavy rain showers did nothing to dampen the spirits of the 23-boat fleet.

R3: T3G(2) aka *Gwaihir* making their first appearance with Rachel Wigmore on the stick, mum Debbie and Rachael Struckett doing the hard work, were neatly away from the pin on the port-biased line, with *Skua*, *Swift* and *Darter* in attendance. *Skua* held on longer in the tide and then made a fast and safe starboard tack approach into Wear. Job done. After the little jig to Anchor and on the long run to Dunes *Darter* got past *Gwaihir* but lost out immediately after rounding. The stronger breeze had arrived earlier than forecast and the long beat back enabled *Swift*, *Curlew* and *T3G(1)* to climb into the top places.

R4: Actually it was all over before it started as *Marengo* had an impregnable points total but the battle for other podium places was still wide open. The wind had built to a steady 22 knots (and would later gust to 30) and a frenzy of sail changing took place before the hardy remnants of the fleet set out, gamely including *Marengo*. *Blue Phantom* and *Echo* (helmed by Charlie P) were best away from the lumpy Rookwood start with *Skua* and *Solitude* close by. *Skua* was first round Wear (much used throughout the weekend in the mostly NE breezes). The run to Calvert was exciting – part of the imaginative (ie. backbreaking) harbour tour that PRO Nigel P had crafted for the finale – but positions didn't change *Skua* always in front, *Echo* strong in 2nd and *Buccaneer*, capable as ever in stronger winds, 3rd.

Results

- 1st *Marengo* (Carolyn, Sue and Ginny)
- 2nd *Skua* (Harry, Christine Graves, Helen Williams, Mark Chilton, Tim Barker.)
- 3rd *Buccaneer* (Mike, Bettine and Steve)
- 4th *Swift* (Jon, Dicks/Tim P and Alan)

Brass tacks

- *Skua*'s daily performance was fabulously consistent – hard aground twice on Saturday and two emphatic victories on Sunday.

- *Ka Nyenga's* overall result does not fairly reflect their frequent appearances up front – a tad more staying power required, boys?
- i spent the weekend 'recalibrating their (new) standing rigging' – or something.
- Commiserations to the stricken Mark Struckett – off games with tennis elbow (from loading the dishwasher!). Keep taking the Botox.
- Do not adjust your set. How many different boats did Steve Hammett sail on?
- Memo to Glover: If you will insist on going for a fully clothed 5 minute swim in 8C water temperature please make sure you are properly 'attired'. Full marks to *Curlew* for their hand brake turn from 10 knots with kite up to standby.
- Snowy's pre-season preparations on the golf course seemed to have paid dividends.
- So *Marengo* has called a halt to *Solitude's* early season series-winning sequence. Congratulations to the dominatrix, back on top on top again, and to her lovely team.
- Not a single Swallow ventured out on Monday!.