

## SALTY SATURDAY

Saturday July 16 2011 was the date of first race of the Summer Series of the Long Beach Harbor Invitational Series (LBHIS). In Chino, where I live, the day was overcast. Right up until 10:00am when I left for Long Beach, a thick cloud cover blocked the sunshine.

As I headed down the 91 freeway to the 55 and then to the 22, things cleared up in Orange County and the sun was brightly shining over Alamitos Bay. What a glorious day lay ahead. I skipper the boat WHOOOSH, a 25' Capri and for the Summer Series I had switched fleets and was going to race in the Spinnaker class. The Navy Yacht club, under the able leadership of Fleet Captain and all around good guy Tony Reitdyk (who is a fellow dutchman to boot) was the sponsor of this "Salty Saturday" race. Tony had informed us at the last after race party that Navy YC was going to use a Inside Finish for this race, meaning that the start line would be out in the ocean, but the finish line would be in front of the Long Dock by the Navy YC clubhouse. Tony said they were doing this for the convenience of the committee boat crew which also had to double as the after race party staffing crew. In talking to the other racers after the race everybody seemed to enjoy the Inside Finish. This is an idea maybe we can think about at Little Ships for next years races.

At any rate, the boats gathered out at the start line. It was a small turnout with four boats in the A fleet, three boats in the B fleet and three boats in the non-spin fleet. Tony sent the A fleet out to mark 36 near Queens gate and then back down inside the wall with instructions to round the South side of the wall to starboard and head out to mark 23, which is the yellow lighted bouy "A" out in the ocean. From there came a long downwind leg all the way the finish line in front of the Navy YC clubhouse. I noticed before the race that our fearless commodore Ben Smith had brought along Brian Dair, the Ullman Sailmaker from Long Beach to crew on Renegade. Brian is a great sailor and teacher and generally helps everyone on the boat improve their skills. When I next saw Ben walking up to the after race party he was in good spirits. He said he thought they ran a good race and 1st place was in reach. It turns out that he was correct, Renegade took first on corrected time by 10 seconds on a 10.5 mile race. That is close racing.

The non-spin fleet consisted of three boats, dominated as usual by Pacific Wolf. From my perch, five minutes ahead of them in the B fleet, it looked like Calibreeze, the Catalina 320 that has been very competitive this year got off to a good start, but Swell Lover skippered by octogenarian Nate Tucker and his fellow octoman Hobby Hobson with assistance from former commodore Paul Barbe and Nates 14 year old neighbor Ben did pretty well, edging out Calibreeze for 2nd place by 12 seconds on corrected time.

The B fleet has a huge rating gap within it. Love and War, skippered by Steve Cole has a 138 rating and hit the starting line running and never looked back. The course took us up to mark 36 at the wall near Queens gate and then all the way back down to mark 32 in the corner where the channel wall meets the Belmont Shore beach. From there it was back to the wall and mark 31 and then to the inside finish. I have been racing WHOOOSH in the

spinnaker fleet on Thursday nights for a couple of years. Those races are typically about an hour and usually involve one spinnaker pop. The LBHIS spinnaker fleet races typically are longer and involve more than one spinnaker pop. It is in dealing with multiple spinnaker pops that my and my crews' inexperience is most pronounced. We had a weak start and were following Bedlam, a Catalina 27 with a higher rating (198) than WHOOOSH (180) and skippered by the gregarious Al Davidson out to the windward mark 36. Bedlam was ahead of us going to the lay line but we tacked at the same time as they did and were able to point better going up to the mark. They got in our bad air as they approached the mark and had to throw in another tack allowing us to round Mark 36 ahead of them. That was the high point of the race for us. Going down wind we held our lead, but Bedlam never fell too far behind. We did a poor job of planning our spinnaker douse at Mark 32 in the corner and Bedlam passed us up as we floundered to get everything under control. This leg was less than a mile and by this time the wind had picked up and getting ready for another spinnaker pop at Mark 31 at the wall became our obsession. We got the spinnaker sheets back in position and decided to use my heavier spinnaker for this pop. Amazingly Bedlam was nearby and we were neck and neck heading to mark 31. Unfortunately for us, 50 feet before the mark, when we thought we could make it, it became clear that we were not going to. So we tacked and immediately saw Bedlam racing by us as we moved to their rear to round the mark. They made rounding cleanly and headed for the inside finish. We on the other hand watched our heavier spinnaker do the hour glass routine as we struggled to get underway.

Eventually we were able to untangle the spinnaker and complete the run to the channel entrance where we doused the spinnaker and cruised to the race finish. We learned lots of lessons. Number 1 being we need to get some more practice. Back at the slip, long time racer and dock neighbor Bob Imrie spent some time giving us pointers on improvements we can make in our technique. My crew were all eager to go out early Thursday and practise spinnaker lifts and douses in an attempt to improve. Isn't that what it is all about? Improving and learning, all the while enjoying the beautiful weather and the great camaraderie that comes from being part of sailing.

Our next LBHIS race is sponsored by Little Ships on August 20, 2011. As always I am looking for committee boat crew. Many thanks to Dick Martin who has already agreed to be the PRO and to Bruce Clark who has agreed to provide his boat Dream Chaser as the committee boat.

Happy sailing!

Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel  
2011 Fleet Captain  
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