

NOT TOO SPOOKY OUT THERE

Well, race fans, the Spook Race wasn't scary. Unless you are unfamiliar with what eel grass does to Mike Meszaros' appearance, otherwise seeing him and Ken T. in the whaler¹ was reassuring. Fall brings the nicest winds of the four seasons, steady and almost enough to get an Argyllish boat up on a plane.² Really pleasant, unlike the 'boxing matches', as Peter Lassetter described racing in the beginning of summer, during which nobody retired³ because their egos wouldn't let them find outlet for fellow sailors later at the bar who toughed it through, where wounds and placement are salved by the straight stuff.

Interesting it is to have Mike M's commentary at the end of the dock about trim⁴ and tactics, since he was watching the fleet. It's generally conceded he's one of the best sailers in the Club, and anything he says is mulled over, like aged wine.

Participation is a funny thing at our Club. For the previous race, the whole Hog, 'round about 22 boats lined up close hauled for the start.⁵ This time, three fine Scots jockeyed at the start and traded lead up and down the Bay. Have you ever wondered which way is 'up' and which way is 'down' the Bay? Consider: if the Bay drains to the north, gravity would define down; if south defines down, then it's the other direction; and if you're poetic, 'down to the seas' would be in the direction to the sea. Anyway, with a tide that made the gangway practically horizontal, up and down the Bay meant enough water to sail south of downtown. We could have called out an order to Tom and Priscilla for pizza on the last lap, and hold the anchovies, because Rob't Cardwell was cooking and not, tuna for the spooky dinner.

What's it like to race in the autumn, sunny, mild and steady? For one thing, you'll never know unless you're out there. For another, that's why we sailed.

So, who sailed? Tom Nemeth found passable excuse to slip out the door, joined by his crew Henry King, we think the same featured in Latitude 38 at the helm of something on that other Bay, in something a lot more than a Scot. Peter Lassetter put the race on and had his ever trusty crew Susan and Patrick aboard. Mike Severson and Ron Buono reveled in first place here and there, but couldn't manage success.

And what was recorded? Tom Nemeth showed sailing skill can be transferred from the likes of an Olson 25, to a world class boat like the Scot, while Peter showed weight can be overcome by ability and re-re-rereading of the wind.⁶ First and second, respectively. Curiously enough, current, which was probably got up to three miles an hour, wasn't considered by the racers. Where an Olson is sailed, current is a factor; over a length of water, current will push or pull a boat a whole, whole lot. To be more specific, to windward⁷ a Scot might get up to six miles an hour. So if at the strongest, the disadvantage would be half its potential speed, tactics would dictate hugging the shore one way and getting into the swing of things the other.⁸

Three laps up and down, each of the three tried one side of the Bay and then the other, until the west and middle showed the strongest wind. Tom's learned to keep the Scot flat and Peter's learned the advantage of throwing the spinnaker up the instant the boat rounds the mark and both jibbed⁹ as necessary, unlike that other guy who only did so when the obvious became obvious.

Thanks to Carol Skold, always generous with her time and skill who tutored Susan Medina and Katherine Landreth about the shapes.¹⁰

notes

¹ the Club motor boat, beat to hell and looking such, but what a beautiful beast

² a plane occurs when a boat's speed is enough for it to ride onto the wave it creates; a Flying Scot, duh

³ to not finish the race and return to dock

⁴ to shape the sails to obtain maximum efficiency

⁵ on the starting line, sailing into the wind's direction as much as possible

⁶ to assess the most favorable wind location

⁷ as #6

⁸ a double meaning: current is less in shallow water; never getting out there in the big bad waters

⁹ when the wind is aft, or behind, rotating the working sails and spinnaker to the other side of the boat; a maneuver which can have unwanted results in heavy wind

¹⁰ to start a regatta, those colorful flags raised and lowered on the standard, accompanied by music to the racer's ear and a jolt like a triple esp