

Here is Charles Witherup's report on the 50 Mile Night Race

(Addendum by Tim Bonniwell)

July 19, 2013. An auspicious day. Didn't the DOW reach a record high? And the IYCCYCF's annual 50 mile night race took place!

It wasn't obvious who would participate in the race ahead of time. Invictus committed a week ahead of time but no one else. A day ahead of time it looked like Quetzal III would attend as well as Bruce (with his Bayfield 29). The day of the race Q3 had crew, didn't, did then definitively didn't. Bruce committed and it was actually going to be a race! 2 boats crewed with 5 aboard each.

The race began at 6PM. Course: Mark I, buoy 51A (port rounding), Mark I. The wind predictions I saw were roughly 10kts from the W (gusting to 22) for most of the night. Others, using other sources for wind info, saw winds from the S early and then turning N later. As I've said before, wind forecasts seem to be a bit more of an art than anything else...

Both boats started flying spinnakers. The W wind seemed about right for the first section - Invictus was able to make it to just before Milliken on one tack. The winds were a bit lighter than predicted, but we were still moving. That tack became increasingly a reach as we neared the point as the winds clocked more to the N. That was the last that the winds had anything to do with the forecast!

A few miles more up the lake Invictus was hit by very high winds and double reefed and furled as quickly as able under the conditions. After a few miles of these crazy winds (accompanied with putting on PFDs and fowlies) things calmed enough that we were able to attempt to hail Bruce and warn of the impending storm. It took an hour, or so, to finally reach him through convoluted means (phone calls to friends and family members to friends and back? Something like that) and to learn that they had been becalmed near Milliken for 1 1/2 hours and they were going to return to IYC.

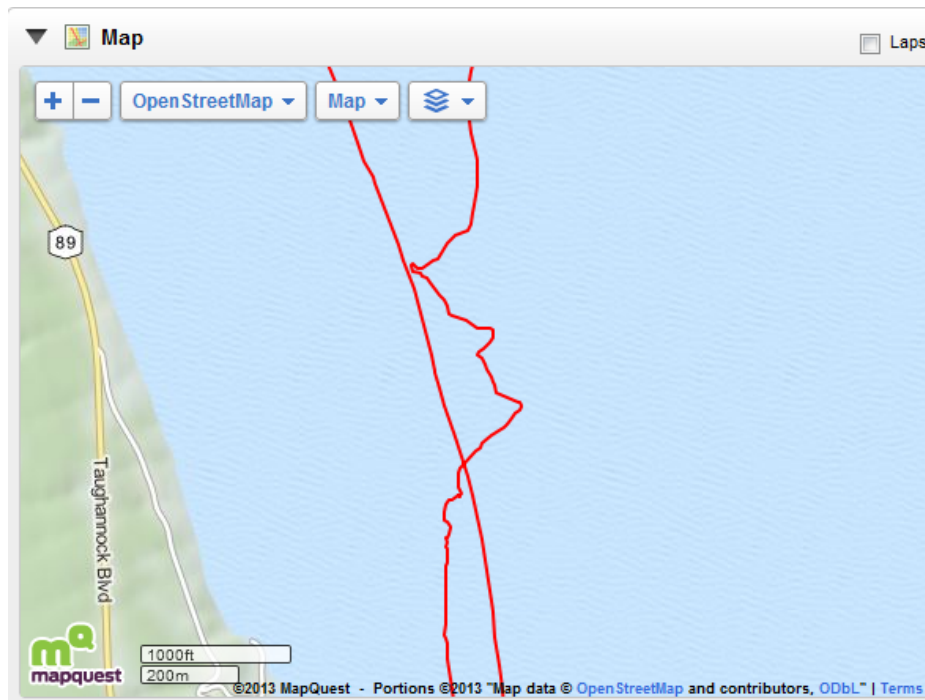
Invictus raced on! Her goal this time was to best her time of last year...

And race we did... On through the night and the dark... Storms? We saw a few. Most were off in the distance. After our first squall we didn't see (while we were watching the gauges) winds over 19kts. Which is still pretty exciting when you're flying all of your canvas!

We rounded early in the AM - an hour earlier than last year!

We had everything you would expect on a 50-mile race - beer, rum, chicken, coffee, pasta, sleep (sort of), sun, moon, rain, bad wind forecasts... I guess there wasn't a lot you wouldn't expect, really!

We were becalmed a mile and a half from IYC on the return - just after having an hour and a half run of whitecaps on the water. Compare, if you will, the course out (the straight line) with the course back:

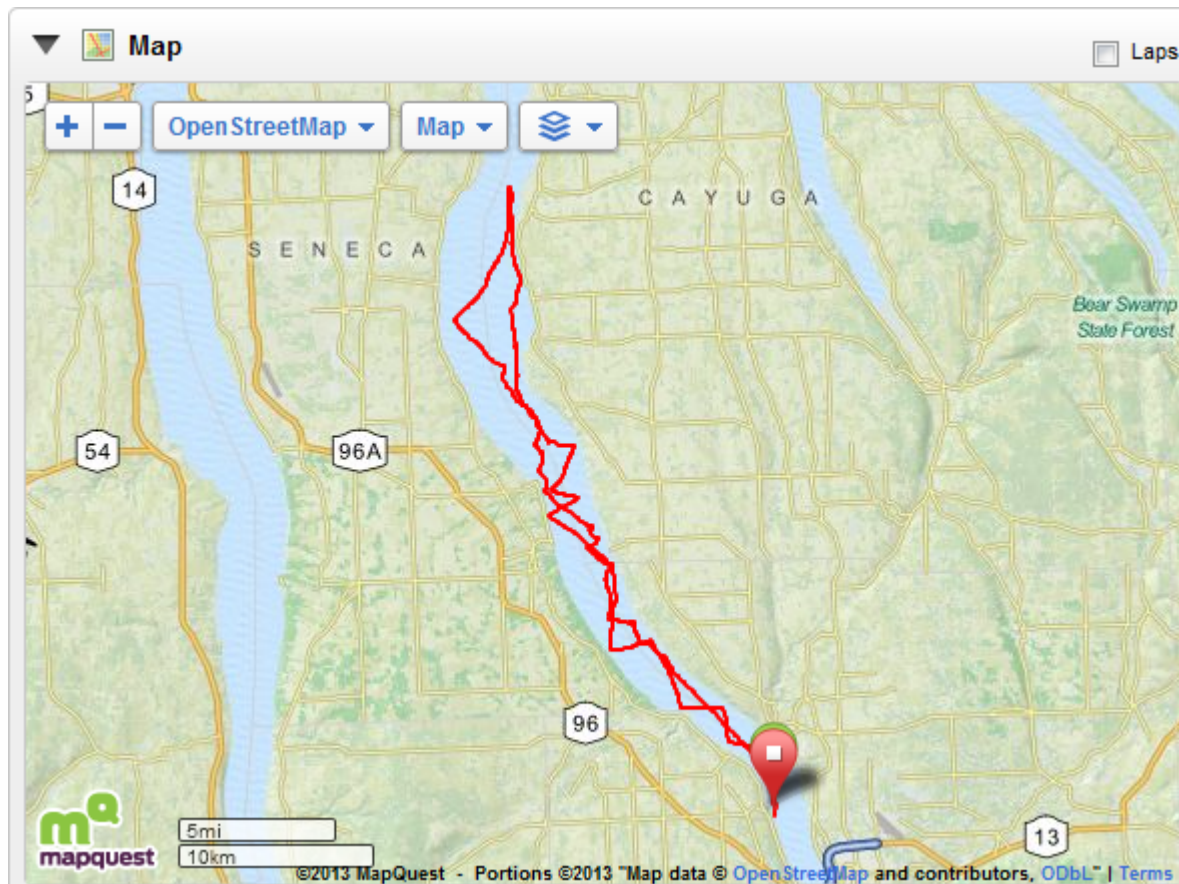


That last mile and a half took us over an hour to complete - tacking back and forth following the whims of the fickle (and very quiet) winds.

A few statistics:

- Total distance travelled: 60.71 miles
- Total time: 14:38:30
- Moving time: 13:18:17 (ha)
- Average speed: 4.1 mph
- Max speed: 9.8 mph

The whole course:



Here is an excerpt from Tim's account of the race:

We had a great time! We ate excellent food to a medley of fine French and Gaelic tunes, under sometimes moonlit and sometimes lightning lit skies and downed it with delectable drink. We worked on skill development and became very efficient at grasping every wisp of air, then turning on our A game as we scrambled to shorten sails and cling to the lifelines. Other than the hard labor, deteriorating weather, poor visibility and lack of sleep, it was a fine cruise. You may think that doesn't sound like a lot of fun, but I think the crew would agree it was a great adventure!