



# *The Pennant*

21 September 2013

## 50 Mile Day Race, Saturday, September 21

Here is Charles Witherup's race report:

As usual, the skippers' meeting will be at 12:45 at the South Pavilion of the Ithaca Yacht Club. Again we hope to sail two races. The start of the first race will be at 1:30. It was a dark and stormy day. Wait. No. Wrong comic strip. Hmm. It sure was windy out! Yes, that sounds a lot more like the story we're trying to tell, here.

So, the IYC-CLCF has a few long-distance races during the year. One of them is the daytime 50-miler. This year this particular race happened on September 21. The object of this race is to get from IYC to the 51A buoy and back before anyone else (on corrected time).

The competition this year was between Tim, Andrew, Ted and John on Tim Bonniwell's Catalina 30, INVICTUS (named for a nineteenth century poem), and Susan Swensen and Charles Witherup on Andrew Gill's Ranger 33, VESANIE (French for mental disorder).

The race started a half hour late because Andrew and Charles had to motor VESANIE down to the IYC from up the lake. Under summer conditions (ie. no wind) this would have been a simple enough matter, but we were pretty darned close to fall (mere hours from it, I tell you). And it was pretty windy. Windy from the direction we needed to head.

The race started at 9:30AM instead of at 9AM as per the racing rules. Given that we're all friends (and what's a race without a competitor?), the race committee decided to wait until we showed up to actually start the race. Rather magnanimous of them, really.

And the rest? What about the story? Oh, please! It happened just like any other sailing race! There were winners and others! There was wind. Oh! There was wind! And there was calm... Rain? Yeah. We all got completely and utterly soaked. Way beyond soaked. Very wet, indeed. And we sailed.

It was windy. Forecast was 10kts with gusts to 30 from the South in the AM changing to 5kts with gusts to 7 from the North in the afternoon. Maybe some rain. It turns out that the morning had winds a bit higher on the low side and, perhaps, a bit lower on the high side, on average. What I mean to say is that there was a heck of a lot of wind in general but the gusts didn't really seem to go to 30 (although you'd have to ask Tim to know since he's the one with the anemometer. When he radioed us about the wind, we heard things like, "That one was 20kts!" or, "It's blowing at 14 right now!"). Still, it was windy. Going downwind we (note, at this point, that this "we" is Charles and Susan) were double reefed and flying a 135 for a headsail. Tim stuck with double headsails (and a double reef on the main) for this leg.

We cleared Long Point 5 minutes behind Tim. Before noon. Think about that for a minute. If you're not Richard Stephens with his Corsair 28 trimaran, when is the last time you made it to Long Point in under 2h30? Something along the lines of never, perhaps? Yeah. Well, see, we made it that quickly because it was windy. Windy out of just the right direction (we only gybed twice). Yes, of course, the gusts and waves made things a bit hairy at times —boat rocking back and forth, spinning up to 45 degrees (and more) in a few seconds—but, wow, were we flying! Our GPS showed our average speed for the first 2 hours at over 6.5kts!

We were going to just call it good at Long Point and stop there. Tim sweet-talked us into going the distance – “My GPS says we'll make it to 51A in under an hour!” And onward we went...

Which was fine and all but as exciting as going downwind with rollers and big wind is, going upwind against rollers and big wind is hard work. We furled half of our headsail and were still over 45 degrees even with the main just flopping in the breeze. And given that we had a hard time limit for getting back to the dock (we had to get back in time for the Laurie Anderson show) we turned on our motor, dropped sail and turned straight into the wind.

After a half hour of little progress, Tim suggested that we rehoist at least a slip of the mainsail. This, of course, helped with the “feel” of the helm (and our forward progress).

An hour later the winds came down and shifted to the North. We killed our motor and went back to sailing.

Then it started to rain. And pour. Then rain. Then pour.

And the winds after that? Well, they came and went. Mostly North and entirely tame. When they went to calm a second time we gave up a second time and motored again. Tim? Well, he kept sailing... He went on to win, of course (“of course” since we weren't in the race any longer), and we went on to Laurie Anderson.

It was a great race. It was fun. It was pretty amazing to be that close to Tim for that long (he was in sight the whole race). It was good for us (me and Susan) to work together and to see that we can deal with whatever crazy stuff the weather throws at us. It does give a bit of pause when considering future possibilities like oceanic crossing.

Regardless, here's to some more of these exciting times and to seeing you out there next time or at least next Sunday!

### Third Race Day of the Fall Series, September 29

The skippers' meeting will be at 12:45 at the South Pavilion of the Ithaca Yacht Club. We plan to sail two races. The first race starts at 1:30.

See you at the South Pavilion.

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