



Handicaps.

There was a lot of discussion about this perennial and emotive topic after last Saturday's race and, as a result I have had a number of in-depth discussions with Greg Lane who is our expert on the present system

As I result of this, I am, personally, quite relaxed about its continued usage. Like most of us, I did not understand much about how it works, but now, after several patient explanations from Greg, I am much happier.

Greg has offered to address a Skippers meeting in the near future to explain the system and to answer any questions or criticisms that may arise. As Jim and myself will be away for a couple of weeks we will arrange this meeting sometime in February. In the meantime, rest assured that the present system certainly does the job as far as I am concerned. It has managed to prevent any yacht winning more than one race so far this spring/summer!

Greg pointed out to me that the system itself is explained in the 2005-8 Blue Book and also in the Sailing Instructions on our Club website. In the meantime, if you have a few moments, have a glance at one of them so that you can follow Greg's explanations more easily at the meeting. I wish I had!!

Last Saturday's Race.

I learned a lot last Saturday so, for want of something to write about, I thought that I might go through some of our trials and tribulations during the race.

For a start, my day did not start well, I was late launching the tinny, worried about Col and Tim waiting on the wharf wondering where I was and then we had a rush rigging and arrived the start just as the 15 minute time check was being read out over the radio. As a consequence we did not work out what side the spinnaker should be hoisted on after the Salamander mark rounding. Naturally it was on the wrong side and as the wind was gusting quite strongly we could not change the sheets over on the work.

The start was a disaster. I completely underestimated the strength of the run in tide. As it was a relatively low high (1.4 metres) I did not think it would affect us much if we headed west and then ran down to the line, sheets eased, to hit it at speed. The wind, a southerly, dropped out on us and the tide made sure we were over a minute late! Worst start of the season. In future, if there is a southerly and/or a run in tide, we will be on the line, sheets eased and well away from the Soldiers Point headland!

We managed, more through good luck than good management to work our way to about third place. One of the larger yachts was a little below us but well ahead, he received what he considered to be the knock of the day, tacked, and then received another. About five minutes later, he was 500 metres behind us. Lesson learned was that in a southerly or sou'wester, unless you are absolutely certain that the shift is going to stay in, don't tack!!!

We did ease sheets slightly as we came within about 200 meters of the mark as we were well above it but we were very lucky to be able to make it on that tack as, true to form, in Salamander Bay, the critical puff came from almost Southeast!

Rounded the mark, sorted out the spinnaker sheets which took ages, and then took off after Nervous who scooted away and Knot Happy, the other Etchells who was well in front of us as a consequence of our poor start.

During the run to Wedding Cake there were no real dramas, we had some really strong puffs which were good planeing fun and Knot Happy had a few problems with her spinnaker which helped us catch up a bit. When we reached Middle Island, we decided to keep going on Port tack until we were certain that we could clear the island when we tacked onto Starboard to head down to Salamander mark. K.H tacked a little early and could not clear the island which enabled us to catch up a bit. As we headed down to Salamander, the wind seemed to have a bit more west in it and we started to ease sheets a bit as we reached about halfway down Wanda Beach. Wrong!!! K.H was a little ahead of us and to leeward at this stage.

Sure enough, as we came within about 400 metres of the mark, we were both headed and eventually had to tack to make it. K.H. judged their tack beautifully and nicked around the mark. We were about 30 metres behind them and tacked straight into a header! By the time we rounded the mark, K.H had their spinnaker up and set!!!

Managed to catch up on the run and rounded Wedding Cake about 30 metres behind them. They seemed to be heading for the Soldiers Point shore and were a little overpowered in the gusts, we headed more for Middle Island and as the gusts hit, eased the mainsail and eased away to try and catch waves and perhaps plane a little. We gradually overhauled them and then, as I was concerned that they might get a private gust that could peter out before it reached us, we started to harden sheets a little and eventually were about two boat lengths ahead of them.

Here is where we made our mistake of the day!!!

We reached Soldiers Point wind shadow, just before they did and I foolishly left sufficient room for them to just squeeze between us and the shore. As soon as they established an overlap, Geoff called for shore room, I had to give it to him, he received the puff about a millisecond before we did and he beat us by half a boat length!

We should have either not left room for him between the shore and ourselves or stayed over in the middle or nearer the Island where we were away from the blanketing effect of the Soldiers Point Headland Sub Zero did this and nearly caught us. My derriere is still sore!!!

A great day though, it is terrific to have the competition from the Corlette Point Etchells fleet and I hope that our own "Cool Bananas" joins us soon.

For those of you that would like a change or a boat of your own, you could do a lot worse than an old Etchells, you can buy a good one for about \$8000 and come and give us some competition!

The Starters Pole.

We are having a new box made to replace the present one which is somewhat rust affected. In a couple of weeks we will need to borrow a 240 volt generator, capable of running an angle grinder and a drill. If you have one, could you let us know. We will only need it for about half an hour and it will make the job of attaching the box to the mast a lot easier. If you could let either myself or Peter Ballard know of its availability, it would be very much appreciated.

See you at the Bar!!

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