



From the Bridge!!

Ahoy!

Jack Hollman Trophy. One of our best days in ages, we had a near record fleet of 26 yachts and three starts! The big run out tide certainly made sure that nobody really missed the start and provided plenty of excitement for both those competing and those watching! As predicted, the conditions at Nelson Head on the way back were somewhat challenging with yachts who tried to take the shortest way home being severely penalised, in some cases, sailing through their spinnakers!

We had a great race with the Etchells from the Corlette Point Club. They had slightly more boat speed than us but we took advantage of Peter Chappelow's advice (below) and we able to finish only a couple of boat lengths behind them. They headed for Soldiers Point and had to cross the channel to keep in the wind whereas we did not have to stem as much tide on the island side. Altogether a great day and we are all very grateful to the Holman family for their generosity and attendance on the day.

Peter Chappelow emailed me the following, just a shade too late to include in last week's FTB.

Peter Chappelow's hint. " We run a plotter and, as you know, current is strongest in deepest water. Main east channel with best depth runs Middle Is-Anchorage. A tongue of shallower ground runs east from Middle Is and we often sail right up the centre of it (it is fairly narrow) then gybe for the finish in the island back eddy. Why am I telling you this!" Thanks Peter, very handy last Saturday!

Makes you think that maybe the installation of a depth sounder may be a good idea. Alternatively, have a look at the Port Stephens Admiralty Chart and make a note of the deep channels. Peters recommendation above stands out very well.

When looking at the chart, the shallow ground along Wanda Beach is quite obvious and, like the south west shore of Shoal Bay often has a "back eddy" along it during a strong ebb tide. Not all of the water is flowing out the heads, some has to eddy back to compensate for the outflow in the deeper parts and you can quite often get quite a helping hand along these shores.

Carry a tide chart After all of the above, it would be an obvious idea to carry a depth chart on the yacht. How many of us do? I know mine is in the car and about 6 months out of date. I am going to rectify this today!

Our course sheets How many of us have had a look at the Club website and updated our course sheets? There are several new courses this season and all are on the net. We have copied ours onto both sides of a 6" x 4" photographic sheet and had it laminated. It sits in a small pouch on our centre console so that I can pull it out and give it to one of the crew to read and confirm the courses with all of us. In the heat of the moment in those few minutes before the start it is easy to make a mistake. If anyone would like a copy, give me a ring. One idea that Bruce Boulton has is to also copy the course flag alongside the appropriate course. Very good idea. I am going to make up a second sheet with the special flags and their meanings on it and stick it somewhere easily seen.

Another reminder Try and remember to state whether you are on 94 (27meg) or 77 (VHF) when you call the club starter. The two radios are close together in the van and it is difficult to work out which mike to pick up when someone calls in. Also, don't forget to sign off. You can be disqualified for not doing so.

Wind indicators. We don't worry about having a wind indicator at the top of our mast any more. A bird pinched it some time ago and we now use other peoples! They will often indicate the wind that you are about to receive especially in very light conditions. We also find that lengths of Videotape attached to the shrouds and the backstay are essential especially in light and variable winds and when flying our spinnaker. They don't last long but if you break up a cassette and keep one of the reels on your boat they are very easy to replace.

Hint Department. When one of your competitors overtakes you in a similar boat, have a look at the set of his sails. Compare things like main and jib sheet tension, leech curve, and whether they are sailing their boat a lot "flatter" than you are. Weight on the weather rail can make a huge difference. We have noticed a big improvement in our upwind performance with the fourth crew member adding to the righting moment.

Incidentally, those "Port and Starboard" stickers on our boom came in handy last Saturday when a 30' yacht tacked onto port right in front of us with about 30 secs to go! You could hear the shouting from the Clubhouse!

Happy Sailing.

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