

Snowflake #1 Report
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Snow flakes were nowhere to be seen, unless used in reference to us Salt Springers crewing the nine boats who came out on an early December winter day, anticipating an enjoyable, serene, inclusive day on the water. If anyone from other parts of Canada happen to read this, it is one of the reasons we live in the southern Gulf Islands. Cruising and racing are year round endeavours.

Forecasts were for light North-North West winds of 3-5 knots. No rain was forecast, so it looked to be an enjoyable day. And so it was. In fact, it was even better than advertised.

The current was a light flood all day. The course was set at Ganges shoals(P) Welbury spar(S), U62(S), Welbury (S) U62 (S) and finish. While this was being presented the wind was less than a knot, with the chimney smoke in the distance suggesting what breeze there was the promised NW.

There were suggestions that we motor to 2nd sisters for a start. But as we debated I pointed out that the starting line flags were beginning to suggest the promised NW was settling in. Eventually, it was decided to leave it to the wind gods to provide, and we would do a regular start.

Out on the water, before the start, the flags on the start marks were moving, just. With the genoa up there was enough to fill the sail. Looking around all nine boats were finding the same.

RH cruised around with a boat speed of about 3 knots with a wind at 3-4 knots. (*Any surprise that RH is always in the running for the podium? – ed*). With 5 minutes to go we were over at the starboard side circling the moored boats expanding seaward out of Squalor Bay. We (John Gauld and I) then headed at a close reach at an angle toward the Port end.

Timing was crucial and a wind gust had us moving too fast with 2 minutes to start. Luffing up we slowed but we were out behind the port end pin now. Most boats were moving the other way. Kay D was cruising along the line toward the pin end. Sparky was out beyond us and closing the line. We prepared the spin bag and put the pole for a port tack launch. 10 seconds to go and we were edging away from Sparky and out pacing her. We inched a little to the right to give Kay D room to pass ahead, and we were over the line.

Kay D, smartly sailed by Martin as usual, was out in clear air, spinnaker up. RH further back and inside was now also under spinnaker. Sparky's spinnaker was chasing us down, finally passing under our stern, so we gybed away. Deryn Mor, sailed under spinnaker single handed by the wiley seadog Kevin, was showing good speed, and leading the pack on the right side of the harbour.

Now the fleet puffed down the harbour with first this boat and then that getting the advantage. Skeena Cloud was well in the hunt gybing to the left. A couple of the larger boats seemed slow at the start and we later learned that a sideways push of fresh breeze pushed Oasis to the outside of the starter mark and she had to drop spinnaker and head back against the wind to start correctly. Sail handling got a good work out.

As we approached Sisters we were to the left of the channel. The lead boats were stretching the lead. Deryn Mor was smoothly up the center. Sparky was over to the right having gybed over and so we now gybed on to starboard tack over to the Ganges Shoal mark.

Kay D was first around with her spinnaker close reaching up to Welbury. RH was 5 boat lengths back and reaching at 60 degrees apparent wind. Sparky and Deryn Mor were duking it out a little further back: 10 lengths or so. The majority of the fleet were spread further back and across the harbour.

We set in pursuit of Kay D and keeping as high as we could slowly , slowly, narrowed the gap. Both Sparky, Deryn Mor and the fleet receded further aft.

At Welbury we were close abeam of Kay D. We both set off across Captains Passage and now being to windward, Kay D gave us some dirty air. Martin gybed away. We continued across sometimes at a broad reach, sometimes on a beam reach, with little current evident.

Now we had a decision with the coming gybe. It required storing the pole and dousing the spinnaker before the turn at the U62 mark. So we dropped the spinnaker early, removed the pole, and raised the genoa. Martin being more efficient waited, and with the extra speed closed the gap again, but we rounded ahead.

It was now a close haul back to Welbury and the wind was up to 8 knots steady and hitting 13 knots apparent in the gusts. We had to duck Horda Shoals buoy and made the long tack back across the passage to Welbury for the second turn. For some reason Kay D tacked up into the passage twice. By the time we tacked back to Welbury Kay D was back 200 yards Two quick tacks and we were around.

The spinnaker was deployed for the second time but we seemed a little slow. Sure enough, there was Kay D like a pesky Tsetse fly coming up on a fresh wind, and by the time we rounded the mark, I could feel Martins breath on the back of my neck!

As we set close hauled back for Sisters we passed Phoenix on their leg to Welbury. The wind was fresh again and we made good boat speed of 6.5 but only 5.8 over ground. Here was an enigma. What current were we fighting now?

Our course took us high of Second Sisters and just as we thought we should ease off a little the wind gods took control and there was a dramatic header of 90 degrees as the wind backed from the Northerly to a Westerly. We were now headed for the Saltspring shore. Looking back we could see that Kay D was now 5 minutes behind in lighter air and having the similar wind oscillations.

Such was the beat into the harbour as we managed to be on the right side of most of the changes after that. As John said , "We got lucky with the wind". *(It is amazing how often those two get 'lucky' with the wind. – ed)*

We managed a long tack across the line and could see KayD about 10 minutes back. She was well sailed by Martin and likely earned a deserved first place on corrected time. Farther back we could see Sparky and Oasis who had made up much time in the fresh breezes. Dying air affected the fleet and at the end it was a long ride home for Skeena Cloud and Phoenix. Kudos to them for finishing!!

Skeena Cloud had a better race than the results show. After scraping by the bow of a stalled Oasis at the starting line, SC - single-handed - gybed down the harbour almost flawlessly. The final gybe was to an audience at the Ganges Shoal mark. Of course, the

audience inevitably led to a gybe full of tangled lines, stuck sheets, and an over stood mark.

I was told by Shingebiss after the race that my unseen crew should haul me up before the Magistrate for verbal abuse. And so they should. But my crew was not the only crew to get a verbal flogging on that spinnaker run. I finally heard Gybe raise his voice above a soothing rumble to quietly suggest to his crew that they may have lost a sheet. It was likely my fault. He probably had to say it a bit louder than usual to make himself heard over my tirade.

At this point Oasis, Second Wind, Shingebiss, and Phoenix were all behind me. And it stayed that way until the close reach to Welbury where the bigger boats began to close, close some more, then pass me, one by one. But I was still in the hunt for a podium finish. We went around U62, back to Welbury, and then back to U62 again. That was another nasty spinnaker move. After coming around Welbury Spar, Second Wind was just ahead. Unlike SW, I hoisted my spinnaker, and was soon doing 6+ knots, closing in on SW at the mark. I was doing so well that I decided to risk a little more distance, and then a little more, milking the spinnaker run for all it was worth.

This is when the perspective in sailing comes into play. Most times it seems to take forever to close on a mark. But at 6+ knots it was suddenly before me. There was no time for the tomfoolery of stuck sheets on the douse. After finally getting the sheets unstuck and the chute furled, and after again lambasting the crew, I had well over stood the mark (again) and SW had reclaimed all the distance I had earned on her, and then some.

But after sorting out on the radio that we were not supposed to go around the two marks yet again – my unseen crew, it appears, can't be counted on to add more than one and one – I saw that I could still podium. The fleet was stalled just outside of Second Sister.

There they were, sitting ducks. I had all the advantage. I just had to make the right tactical call, develop a strategy, and deliver. After careful, considered evaluation of all the options, I made my decision, 'that looks boring. I am tacking back to where there was breeze'. So I did. I sailed back out into Captains Pass. Turned around, hoisted the spinnaker, and tested how close I could sail to the wind with it. Turns out, pretty close.

Arriving back at Second Sisters, the fleet was either just crossing the line or tacking back and forth across the harbour. I followed suit.

After tying up and sorting the boat I went back to join whoever was left on Oasis. Walking back, I could see Phoenix approaching the line. It was a bit of a relief to see that I was not the only nasty skipper in the fleet. I don't want to say anything bad about Lisa, but it appeared half her crew were about to jump ship. Out there, in the middle of the harbour! Don't believe me, check out the picture at the top of the report.- ed.

It was a grand outing and remember it is the 8th December. In two weeks the days get longer again, and soon it will be spring. 🛎

But first . Remember the 2nd snowflake next Sunday. Weather looks to be much the same as today.



Snow Flake #1 - 12/8/2019 at 10:30

Start: Start 1, Finishes: Place

Rank	Boat	SailNo	NHC3	Start	Finish	Elapsed	Corrected	BCR	Points
1	Kay D		0.894	10:30	13:31:40	3:01:40	2:42:25	0.894	
2	Radiant Heat	67901	0.964	10:30	13:19:11	2:49:11	2:43:06	0.96	
3	Sparky	67901	0.918	10:30	13:40:04	3:10:04	2:54:29	0.854	
4	Oasis	421	0.938	10:30	13:44:04	3:14:04	3:02:02	0.837	
5	Second Wind	175	0.918	10:30	13:50:15	3:20:15	3:03:50	0.811	
6	Deryn Mor		0.88	10:30	14:01:40	3:31:40	3:06:16	0.767	
7	Shingebiss	49077	1.002	10:30	13:40:33	3:10:33	3:10:56	0.852	
8	Skeena Cloud	121	0.8	10:30	14:31:20	4:01:20	3:13:04	0.673	
9	Phoenix		0.808	10:30	15:07:38	4:37:38	3:44:20	0.585	