

## Tommy Whiteside Memorial Regatta

On the weekend of May 22-23, Joleen and I towed our boats to the Columbia Sailing Club (the other CSC) on Lake Murray to sail in the Tommy Whiteside Memorial Regatta. This regatta was a fundraiser for the Tommy Whiteside Scholarship Fund. It was also on the Isotope SAYRA Series calendar, and this year's Supercat 20 Nationals.

We arrived at the yacht club Friday evening, in time to admire the lake view and pitch our tent, but not to rig our boats. Instead, we set up camp and I checked out the party while Joleen took care of some conference calls. After a quick dinner out, we made an early night of it so we'd be ready in the morning.

Friday night had light winds and cool temperatures, so we slept well and woke up ready to race. We unloaded our boats early and headed up to breakfast and the Skippers' meeting. Joleen and I were the only Isotope sailors, unfortunately – we were hoping to get at least three boats, or hopefully five which would have gotten us our own class. There were seven Hobie 16s (in their own class), as well as four Hobie 17s, two Hobie 18s, and a Taipan 4.9 that would be starting with us in Open Fleet B, and Open Fleet A had two Supercat 20s, a Mystere, a Hobie Tiger, a Hobie 20, and a Nacra Inter 20 that had just come back from sailing in the Tybee 500. The regatta also had a PHRF fleet, for the cruising boats.

Joleen and I rigged our boats and chatted with the other sailors, including Nigel Pitt, and Sam Evans, whom we had met earlier this year at the Spring Fever Regatta. Nigel is an avid catamaran sailor who organized Spring Fever. He is very involved in the North American Hobie Class Association, although he sailed the Nacra Inter 20 (borrowed from Dave Mosley who was the PRO). Sam was sailing his Hobie 17, even though he also has an Isotope. We had a lot of fun comparing the boats and scoping out the Taipan.

Then we headed out to the course in barely a breath of wind, which, unfortunately, held. I really should say it came and went. The boats bobbed about for three hours. Every now and then, the wind would appear to fill in, only to disappear again. Eventually, the wind arrived, but it brought a thunderstorm along. When lightning flashed, the Race Committee sent us back to shore. Joleen and I furled our sails, tied everything down and staked our boats to the beach. Most of the other sailors were more optimistic and left their sails up. Those hopes were short-lived though, and everybody packed up when the storm report came in. There was a severe thunderstorm with 60 mph wind gusts across the lake, coming our way.

So instead of racing, we all went back to the clubhouse, drank beer, and bragged to each other about being tied for first place. After the storm blew through, there was a tie-die party and a barbeque dinner, followed by a raffle that helped raise about \$1500.00 for the Tommy Whiteside Fund. Fortunately, our tent stayed mostly dry so we had another nice camp-out.

Sunday morning brought clear skies and light winds. The Race Committee had moved the race schedule up to 9:00am so Joleen and I got up early, packed our gear, and took the tent down before breakfast. After having juice, coffee, and a danish, we hoist sail and went back out on the lake.

Race Committee had set a relatively short modified windward/leeward course. The wind was light and split on the sides of the course with a big glassy area in the middle. Ripples looked a little darker on the left side than on the right and the line was somewhat starboard favored. I decided to start on starboard and go left. So did everybody else. I picked a lane in the pre-start maneuvering, but when the pack ahead of me slowed down, and the pack behind closed in, I opted to sail around to the front. Unfortunately, a small puff came in right then and I wound up too early at the line. So I gybed away just as the puff disappeared. That left me on the wrong tack, with no boatspeed and I barely kept clear as the race started. Joleen sailed past and as I tried to gybe back behind her, I said "Well I really messed up that start".

She replied, "Recover". I was a minute late and quite a ways behind when I finally started so I just concentrated on sailing as fast as I could in the light air. I slowly converged on the pack and finally came up behind Sam Evans about halfway up the course. As I approached, I saw I'd either have to pinch hard, or sail in his dirty air, both of which would be slow. So I decided I really had no choice and I tacked away. I simply had to hope I could cross the glassy area and that the wind on the right was as good.

Fortunately for me, the glassy spot had breeze at sail height, just not at water level. The wind on the right also held and I even got a little lift. I eventually ran into a header and tacked. It looked as if I were now well above the layline to the windward mark. About halfway there, I caught up with the other boats. One tacked well ahead of me. Another sailed quite a ways past before tacking. Then we all got headed. I sailed as high as possible, nearly pinching all the way and just barely made the mark. The Hobie ahead of me missed the mark and had to tack. The skipper that sailed farther out exclaimed "I thought I was being conservative!" and he fetched the mark right behind me. I had made it back to mid-pack.

With the shift, the wind had filled into the center of the lake. It looked much better on the right side than the left so everybody gybed shortly after rounding. The Taipan and two Hobies were well out in front. I was just ahead of a couple of Hobie 17s and, much to my surprise, a Hobie 16. I thought "Wow, he must be a really good sailor" and, sure enough, I spotted a "Hobie Worlds" logo on his hull.

I concentrated on sailing as fast as I could, watching the sails, with quick glances forward and back at the rest of the fleet. About halfway down the course, I felt the wind lighten slightly. The Taipan and Hobies were all the way in the corner ahead and looked like they were moving very slowly. The 17s and 16s were strung out behind. I quickly gybed, not wanting to sail into a lull.

My first reaction was that I had made a mistake, as the wind didn't improve and none of the other boats followed. Then, as I contemplated gybing back, I felt a little puff, which I stuck with all the way down to the layline. I got to the mark a minute behind the Taipan, but well ahead of the Hobie 18s. I caught up a little more sailing up to the line, and finished second, about 50 seconds behind the Taipan. I made a bad start, but felt that I had indeed, "recovered".

I checked my hulls, drank some water, and sponged some dirt off my hulls while watching the rest of the race. Joleen finished in a respectable 7<sup>th</sup> place, just behind Sam Evans who sailed over to show me his rig for positive mast rotation. The wind shifted a little and picked up some, so the RC lengthened the course. Unfortunately, the wind kept shifting, and by the time we started, the line and the course were favored by a good 40 degrees.

This time, I could tell that the whole fleet was early to the line, so I pulled in behind everybody. I started with speed, at the committee boat, right behind Joey Duran on his Hobie 18. I couldn't out-drive him, but I did out-point the fleet significantly and wound up in the lead at the first tack. For some reason, however, I had trouble building speed after tacking and Joey rolled over the top of me. "Good move", I called out as he sailed past. He beat me to the mark by about 75 yards and we both gybed immediately after rounding.

The entire tack downwind was a slow-motion drag race. We both pulled away from the rest of the fleet and I gradually gained on him, finally rolling him back just as we reached the leeward mark layline. Joey and I gybed together, leaving him just ahead, but me to leeward in the controlling position. "That must be a fast boat", he called out. "Either that, or you're a really good sailor."

"It's a fast boat", I replied. "It's rating isn't very far behind yours". Then I proceeded to do what all the sailing books say not to. I played boat-to-boat tactics in a handicap race. I knew it but I did anyways. As the slowest rated boat in the fleet, if I could get ahead, I'd win. Joey was a half boatlength to windward of me and a half boatlength ahead. I'd never be able to pass, but my position prevented him from gybing. He headed up a little, trying to break away, and I smiled to myself. That was just what I wanted. Rule 18 would prevent me from running him past the mark, and I didn't want to risk a bad gybe. So I followed him up away from the mark, and ran him out past the layline before gybing. I was now clear ahead, and able to make a nice tactical rounding.

Then I just watched my wind, kept ahead, and focused on not making a mistake. I made a clean tack at the committee boat layline and was first to the line by 7 seconds. I whooped, knowing I had done the Isotopes proud. Joleen did very well too, crossing the line fifth (but finishing forth on corrected time, ahead of the Taipan). Unfortunately, that was it for the day. The wind died and we bobbed around for most of an hour before Race Committee finally called it quits. I did break down and accept a tow to shore (normally I'm too stubborn) so I could break the boats down and shower before the awards ceremony.

Nigel Pitt took first place in the Open A fleet on Dave Mosley's Inter 20 (someone called out "Hey it's not the boat after all") with two first place finishes. Mike Murphy, the world-class skipper I had noticed earlier won both races in the Hobie 16 class. It turned out that the Taipan 4.9 owed me almost 5 minutes in the first race, so I wound up with two bullets as well, and brought home a first for the Isotopes in Open B class. Joleen finished sixth overall.

All in all, it was a very successful event, both for the Tommy Whiteside Fund, and for the sailors. My only regret is that we couldn't get more Isotopes out. Maybe next year...

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