



The GLSS Solo Challenger

*The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society
Oct. 2015 – Ken Verhaeren (verhaerk@aol.com) editor*

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Editor's note.

Fair sailing my friends. Remember send comments, articles, ideas or anything of value that you want in the SOLO CHALLENGER to Ken at verhaerk@AOL.com

From The Helm

Jeff Neuhalfen GLSS President

It seems every year around this time; we stop and reflect on the summer just past. For the GLSS, this past summer has been a “*sporty*” and rewarding one. Beginning with the thunderstorms over Lake Michigan and continuing through the sustained challenging conditions of Lake Erie, while Lake Ontario and Lake Superior challenged our patience and perseverance. Nearly every type of weather condition was faced at one point or another on our Great Lakes Challenges. Not to worry, as we all know, preparation is the key that gets you to the finish line.

The Fall Series events were also met with less than favorable conditions, causing low turnouts, and difficult sailing conditions. Our GLSS sailors are known to be some of the most prepared and admired sailors on the Great Lakes, taking on the conditions presented. For those participating in these events, their vessels and personal limits were often reached and extended.

The rewards comes from the fellowship and support offered by our GLSS members. It truly is an organization that looks out for fellow sailors, supports and encourages seamanship and safety, while fostering the comradery that is our bond. I look forward to each and every opportunity I have to gather with fellow GLSS members.

Congratulations to all who found their way to the start line, for those who were able to reach the finish line, we applaud you and the efforts it took to complete the challenge.

Looking forward: the Board of Directors is preparing for our Annual Meeting. The AGM will be held at Bayview Yacht Club in Detroit on January 30, 2016. Check the website for information on all the happenings and preparations. So save the date and we will see you in Detroit in January!

“sailing solo together”

Jeff

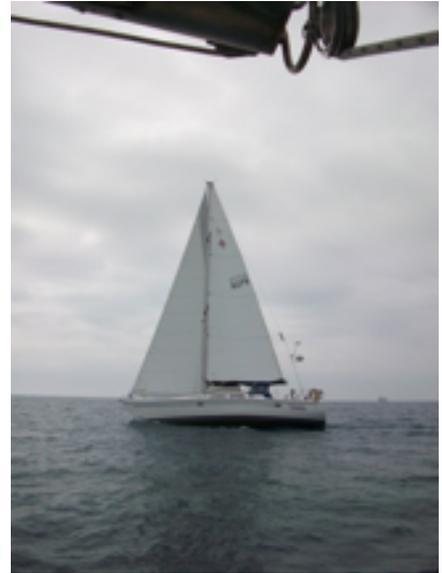
Multi-meter On Board

by Mike Kenny

s/v Debbia'

Do you carry a Multi-meter on board? If not, it's definitely something worthy of your onboard toolbox. Despite never having used one or any knowledge of how to use it, one skipper's onboard multi-meter helped to keep her in this year's Chicago Solo Mac Challenge.

Well into the challenge a skipper called over the VHF radio reported that her instruments complained of low battery voltage regardless of having run the engine over an hour for charging. Good advice was immediately returned. Check your alternator belt. Is it intact and tight? Are all your wire connections and battery terminals tight? Does your amp meter show any charge? The belt and connections were reported good but the amp meter only showed a constant three amp drain. The initial conclusion was that the charging system was not working leaving no option other than abandoning the challenge.



Somewhat ironically, I remembered having a discussion during the pre-race dinner with this very skipper about our charging systems and batteries. She told me her system was recently upgraded to a Balmar Alternator system and she has AGM batteries. All professionally installed by a prominent Michigan boat yard. Recalling this made me wonder if they had installed any type of battery combiner and if so, was it functional at this time. A battery combiner allows the alternator to charge two or more banks of batteries like the Engine Start Battery and the House Battery at the same time while keeping them electrically isolated from each other. This isolation prevents a low house bank from discharging the engine start battery and visa-versa. If a battery combiner was never installed or if there was one that quit working it's possible that her alternator system was completely functional but only charging the engine start battery. If this were the case the simple solution is to use the battery switch to manually combine the house battery bank with the engine start battery while the engine is running. Both banks will then charge. On the other hand, if the charging system was not working and the batteries are manually combined using the battery switch, the already deeply discharged house bank will absorb the charge from the engine start battery. This could potentially create a situation where neither battery bank will have enough charge to start the engine any longer. This would have made an already bad situation worse. So how do we find out without jeopardizing the ability to start the engine? This is where I called on the VHF and asked the skipper if she

had a volt meter on board. She asked if a multi-meter would work and I said yes.

A multi-meter is usually a minimum combination of a Volt Meter, an Amp Meter and an Ohm Meter. There are analog units that use a standard meter movement with various scales to display measured values. More common today are digital versions. A digital multi-meter can be manual or auto-ranging. With auto-ranging you simply select the function like “DC Volts” and then measure. Manual ranging requires that you also select the expected range of the function like “0 – 15 Volts DC”. A multi-meter usually has at least three, often four connection posts for the test leads. These are usually labeled “Common” or “C” or “Ground” for the Black lead. This post is generally used with all meter functions. For DC Voltage measurements the Black lead will go to the negative or ground wire/terminal. Another will be labeled “Volts/Ohms” or “V/Ω”. This post is used for the Red lead to measure Voltage or Ohms. For DC Voltage measurements it goes to the Positive wire/terminal. No damage will occur if the leads are reversed when measuring DC Voltage but a digital meter will show the reading as minus voltage and an analog meter will attempt to move the meter needle backwards. The “Amp” or “A” posts are for measuring current in large or small scales. DC current can only be measured with the meter in series with the circuit under test. If you attempt to measure voltage with the leads in the “Amp” and “Common” posts, you will be applying a direct short across the leads and most likely will blow a fuse in the multi-meter.



Since a multi-meter was available we were able to perform a series of diagnostics to determine if the charging system was working before attempting to manually combine the battery banks with the battery switch. I started by asking for a measurement of the house bank and the engine start battery with the engine off and the battery switch set to “House”. The readings were 11v house battery and 12.5v Engine start battery. This clearly established that the house bank was effectively dead and not charging. And the engine start battery had a good open circuit voltage. This start battery could very well be fully charged or it could be down just a little after being used for only a few starts. At this point we have a baseline but nothing conclusive.

Next I asked the skipper to start the engine, leave the battery switch in the same position and retake the same voltage measurements. The same readings of 11v House and 12.5v Start were returned again. This didn't help any. I was hoping the start battery voltage would have gone up. However, since I know these are AGM batteries with a Balmar smart regulator and the engine had been run for over an hour, I suspected the regulator might be in a float charge stage. Smart chargers follow a specific charge profile to optimally maintain the batteries rather than just



letting the batteries absorb anything they can take. In order to know for sure I needed the start battery to discharge far enough to cause a change in the regulator phase. I asked the skipper to turn the battery switch to “Both” to create a manual connection between the House and Start Batteries and then to start the engine. The measured voltage at this point is way down and the Alternator output is still inconclusive. I asked for the engine to be turned off and the battery switch turned back to “House”. The measured battery voltage was now 11v House and 12V Start. Leaving the battery switch on House I asked for the engine to be started again. This time the voltage reading was 11v House and 12.5v Start. Aha, an increase on the start battery. Finally, I was confident that the charging system was indeed working. I

suggested to set the battery switch on “Both”, start the engine and let it charge for 30 minutes. Afterwards, measure the voltage again. If it was back up the charging system would be proven good. If not, that would be the time to head home. With the deeply discharged house bank, I also suggested running the engine at 1800 RPM to insure the alternator could come close to it's rated output.

After 30 minutes the charge voltage was over 13v. The charging system is working. The skipper will need to manually combine the batteries by changing the battery switch to “Both” when charging and then return the switch to House when not charging. This is workable and allows the skipper to continue the challenge but it is not an ideal arrangement. Forgetting to return the switch from “Both” to “House” when the engine is not running will cause both battery banks to discharge simultaneously. They may reach a point where the engine can no longer be started. Also, since the House and Start Battery banks are most likely different battery types and ages, the weaker battery will negatively impact the other batteries.

It would have been possible to simply have the skipper turn the battery switch to “Both” instead of all this testing with the multi-meter. But if the charging system was not working this skipper might not of been able to make it home. The dead house bank would have certainly zapped the start battery in short time. The multi-meter testing gave us a safe method.

There are lots of other uses for a multi-meter on your boat. Intermittent instrument issues might be due to low voltage at the instrument. This can be caused by bad connections, too many connections or too small of wire for the application. With a multi-meter you can quickly determine if this is a potential problem by measuring the voltage at the supply source and then at the instrument itself. These levels should be the same or very close to the same. If they are not, you know immediately what needs to be fixed first. Ever wonder if bulb or a fuse is good or bad? The ohm meter function of the multi-meter will tell you this instantly. Just select an

Ohm range and touch the test leads to both terminals of the bulb or fuse. Any low reading on the meter will indicate the bulb or fuse is good. Need to know if a receptacle or lamp socket is live, just probe the contacts with the multi-meter on the appropriate function setting. Not sure of the polarity of two wires, connect them to your multi-meter and know in an instant.

An adequate boat Digital Multi-meter with all the mentioned capabilities is less than \$20 and can even be found for much less. Harbor Freight often gives them away for free with their myriad of coupons. They only weigh a couple of ounces. Do yourself a favor and get one for your boat today.

Multi-meters are available at most big box stores and on-line. As an example here are links for Amazon and Harbor Freight:

Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_2?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=multimeters&rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3Amultimeters

Harbor Freight: <http://www.harborfreight.com/catalogsearch/result?q=multimeter>

2015 Lake Ontario 300 Solo Challenge

Brent Hughes

Hi Everyone

It's been 10 days since the **2015 Lake Ontario 300 Solo Challenge** has wrapped up on this, it's 7th running. It is hard to believe that this is the 7th time

that solo sailors have joined this race. Each and every year the saying that "the hardest part is just getting to the start line" rings true, as sailors who planned and positioned throughout the Spring in order to join the fleet had to bail out for one reason or another. I was happy to



see that 10 races joined the 2015 LO300 this year; and we had a 90% finish rate. The solo fleet was actually the LARGEST fleet of 93 yachts in the race this year - so you all deserve a pat on the back for not only getting there, but for finishing this difficult Challenge.

And what a year it was!!! In 14 completions of the Lake Ontario 300, I have never had so much spinnaker work. I believe it's safe to say we had 85% downwind or reaching conditions throughout the entire race, and no really bad weather to speak of.....though Ron and Bill may argue that point.

First and foremost, I wish to extend congratulations to Ken Tramposch on his Beneteau First 30 **Sorpressa**, from Youngtown NY and to Colin Brown on his Swan 47 (!!!!!!) **Sassafras**, from Hamilton ON. They are the GLSS's two newest members after they successfully completed their first Solo Challenge. Ken not only wins the **GLSS Presidents Cup**, for the best first time solo finisher, but he also grabbed 3rd Place in the race overall. He was in the hunt the entire race, and kept the pressure on the lead boats for all 300 nautical miles.

Congratulations Ken!!! Colin Brown held the boat for boat lead in the race from soon after the starting gun until about the 250 nm mark in the race, when he was finally caught up and passed thanks to some large gains made by others during Sunday night.

Collin came back late on Monday night and almost grabbed the lead for line honours again, before finishing 3rd over the line and 4th overall. It is a testament to the competitiveness of the



fleet (and maybe the fickle Port Credit night air on the finish line), that after 64 hours of racing, 1st and 2nd Place (**Pearl** and **Worthy Pearl**) were separated by a mere 4 seconds!!! **Sassafras** was only 4 minutes behind them, and **Sorpresa** a close 15 minutes after that. Fantastic racing, right down to the finish line!!!

Behind **Sorpresa**, **Upstart** followed. Bert had had a wonderful race for 2/3 of the course before falling slightly back in the standings during the fickle winds of



Sunday evening. He still had a great race though, and it was great to see **Upstart** finally do a Solo Challenge on the home lake. She is headed to Lake Superior next, for the Trans-Superior Solo Challenge up there starting on August 1st. Congratulations Bert.

Gene Joelson and Jason Smyth aboard **Joeley Rose**, and **Boomerang**, had a hard fought battle just behind the leaders,

with their lead positioning changing throughout the race. Though Gene eventually came out on top, Jason surely kept the pressure on through the entire race - well done guys....

As Tuesday night turned squally, Bill Tucker aboard **GL3**, and Ron Smallbone on board **Epiphany**, were two of the last boats remaining on the course. Things got tough as a north-east squall line, cold front, and a ton of rain passed over PCYC shortly after the Flag Presentations were held. True to form however, these men are true champions. Bill held it together and finished in very high winds around midnight, and was met on the dock by Jason Smyth. Ron on **Epiphany** however, had a much tougher night. He was off the south shore still, when the front

passed over, and though the winds were behind him, he had a long night with gusts over 45 knots coming from the starboard quarter. With lots of sea room and plenty of water under the keel, Ron simply reduced sail to bare poles, put on his survival suit, closed up the hatches, let the Coast Guard know where he was and that he was A-OK.....and pointed the bow for the mark. When Bill, Jason and I met him on Wednesday morning following his finish, Ron was completely calm, relaxed and a true professional. Always upbeat - Ron is a real pleasure to sail with and against.

Finally, a huge congratulations needs to be said to our one non-finisher, GLSS Board of Directors member David Courtney, on board **Better Still**. A few moments of foredeck business in sail changes and a "non-decision" as he said, led to a small calamity. In very benign conditions rounding Main Duck Island, **Better Still** sailed directly into the boulder field on the western tip of the island, where he became firmly and completely stuck! He was not alone for too long however, as two fellow yacht club members on board two fully crewed yachts (**Lady Windy**, and **Ola**) rounded the island shortly thereafter, and they, along with a third cruiser at the island, pulled him off into safer deeper water. Following this, David sailed the course to completion, crossed the finish line, and asked to be scored as Retired After Finishing (RAF).

A true gentleman and a true yachtsman, David realized his error, blames no one but himself, and vows to return again next year to set things right again. In his words as a born and bred Newfoundlander "You can take the boy from the rock, but you can't take the rock from the boy". Well done David.

So there you have it, another one in the books. Congratulations to all of you on a safe return.

Brent Hughes
Pearl - CAN13775
FBYC, GLSS

Editors Note: See GLSS for results

2015 Trans Slowperior Solo Challenge

A view from the rear

By Bill Tucker

My legal friends tell me I should always start with a waiver of responsibility so here is my attempt at that. All errors of fact and fiction in this article are my fault and I am not liable for any effects these may have caused.

This year's Trans Slowperior or shall we say TS for short, was a slow race; but I get ahead of myself so let's set the scene a bit. This race started with six classes, including the solo class and a double handed class. Four monsters of 60 or 70 feet were in a class by themselves. There were three double handers and six single handers for a total of 29 boats. Well actually there were seven single handers as Dick Lappin in Ginger Kay did the race as an unofficial stealth boat for a total of thirty boats. Yellow Brick tracked all the official boats and using the SPOTs GLSS tracked all seven solo challenge boats.

We got off to a slow start from the Soo as the McArthur lock on the US side was down for repairs leaving only the Poe lock for freighter traffic. All the boats, including my 30 foot GL3 with shallower draft went through the Canadian lock but the larger boats going through the Poe lock were held up by freighter traffic which delayed the start by 15 minutes.

At the start it was fun to watch the monsters charging around. One came up behind me at full speed under full sail swerving at though there was a drunken sailor at the wheel. I yelled "I can't get out of your way" and they steadied up on a course to avoid me. One of the Soo Locks Tour boats was hired to allow spectators to come out and watch the start. The wind was almost on the nose and everyone headed out on a starboard tack.

At the start I was doing almost 6 knots. But things slowed as I got to White Fish Point where I had to do a couple tacks to get out of White Fish Bay but did make it out before the sun went down. Over the next few day the weather followed as pattern. The wind would be light or almost nonexistent for several hours then blow gently almost on the nose for a few hours and the pattern would repeat. Over the four and a half days I was on the water the wind gradually got lighter and lighter.

The fleet initially spread out quickly. After the first day or so I was only able to do radio checks with a couple of the slower boats. I did radio checks at 6 hour intervals with Dick in Ginger Kay, and Doug Milroy in SS George Bailey and two double handed boats: Hairy Bear and Copasetic. Off Keweenaw Peninsula Copasetic dropped out as they were afraid they could not get back in time to go to work. Dick also decided it was just taking too long and dropped out shortly thereafter. I was sorry to see Dick leave as I considered him my real competition. He usually beats me and my only hope is that I can keep him worried that I might beat him. He is a great sailor.

Over my four and a half days of racing my daily runs from noon to noon got shorter and shorter and my average speed got slower and slower:

- ❖ 1st day: 86 nautical miles average 3.6 Knots
- ❖ 2nd day: 78 nautical miles average 3.3 Knots
- ❖ 3rd day: 66 nautical miles average 2.8 Knots
- ❖ 4th day: 52 nautical miles average 2.2 Knots
- ❖ 5th day (15.9 hours): 31 nautical miles 1.96 Knots

This is my fifth TS and by far the longest:

- ❖ 2005: 85.1 hours average speed: 3.8 Knots
- ❖ 2007: 79.4 hours average speed 4.1 Knots
- ❖ 2011: 95.4 hours average speed 3.4 Knots
- ❖ 2013: 105.4 hours average speed 3.1 Knots
- ❖ 2015 111.6 hours average speed 2.9 Knots

Generally my times have been getting longer. This might be attributed to one of or several of four factors. The first is global warming. I am certainly not able to evaluate this factor so I shall go on to the next. My sail maker I am sure would attribute it to the fact that my sails are getting old and that I have not bought his latest and greatest sails each year. It might also be attributed to the fact that I am getting older, 11 years older in fact over the course of this data. But I suspect that it is just due to the fact that I am getting lazier and more relaxed, enjoying the sail more as I have gotten older. Those go fast boats just never got the full enjoyment out of

those last couple of relaxed slow days gliding through the smooth water under a beautiful blue sky.

At one time I thought I might arrive in Duluth in time for at least some of the Wednesday night party. I was finally moving on a nice beam reach at 5 to 6 knots under a beautiful evening sky. It was a delightful sail. But of course the wind dropped and then midnight looked good for a finish at least for a while. I finally crossed the finish line at 3:51 and 5 seconds at a more relaxed speed of 2.3 knots, a speed more consistent with the whole race. When I crossed the finished line the race committee had gone home so I took my own time. I thought about Donald Crowhurst but couldn't figure out how to do a "Donald C" in my situation. (Donald C. is of course the guy in the first solo, non-stop around the world race who stayed in the south Atlantic and made up his own log as though he had gone around the world.) I was the last solo boat to cross the finish line and the last boat to finish of all the finishers. Sounds like pickle boat to me!

My Chicago mafia friends keep telling me this is a challenge and not so much a race. Actually the race was less of a challenge than getting to the starting line and home after the race. The race is only 316 nm long but getting to the starting line for me from Detroit to the Soo is 284 nm and getting home from Duluth is 623 nm. As I started home I had a 15 to 20 knot wind and 4 to 5 foot seas on the nose knocking my average motoring speed from 6 knots to 4 knots. Those conditions sure would sure have been welcome during the race.

When I looked at an early online posting of the race results it showed me with a second place finish. Yet I was sure I had a solid 6th place out of 6. In retrospect maybe if I had protested something I could have got a first; I just wasn't sure what to protest.

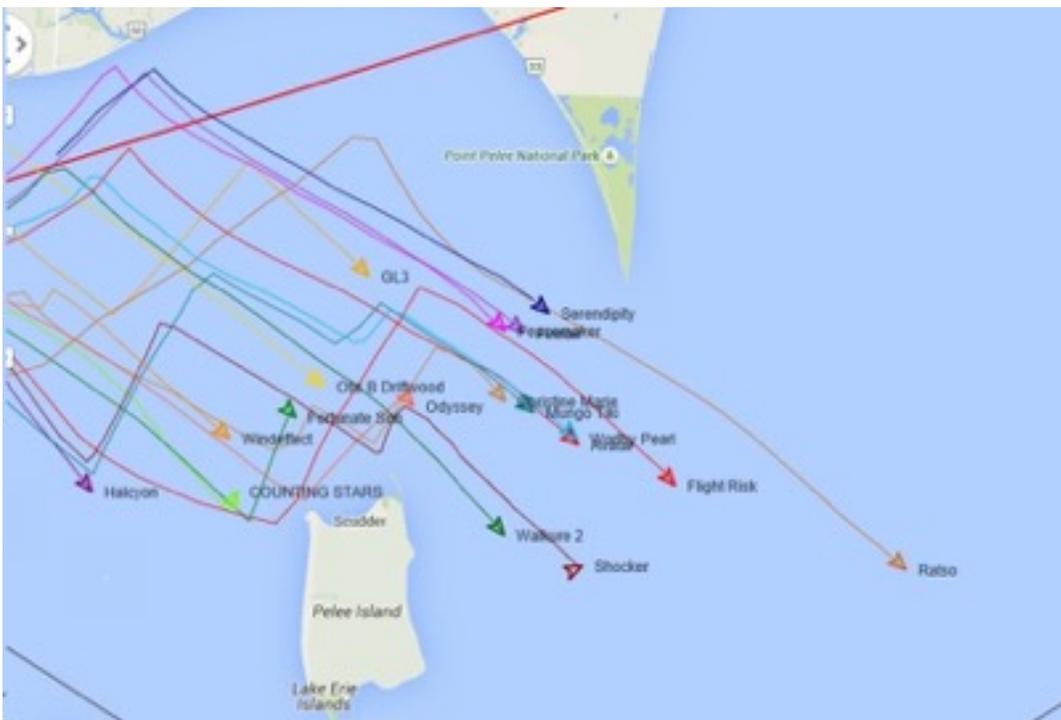
GL3 and I are not very good light air sailors. All in all it was a pleasant sail especially the last two very light air days.

2015 Lake Erie Solo Challenge:

Toughest GLSS Challenge Ever

By Paul Nickerson

Not to start an argument, but Blair Arden and Dave Evans, both with over 30 GLSS Challenges to their credit, said this was their toughest GLSS Challenge. After an uneventful start the fleet of 21 boats made their way towards the Lake Erie Islands in steady SE winds.



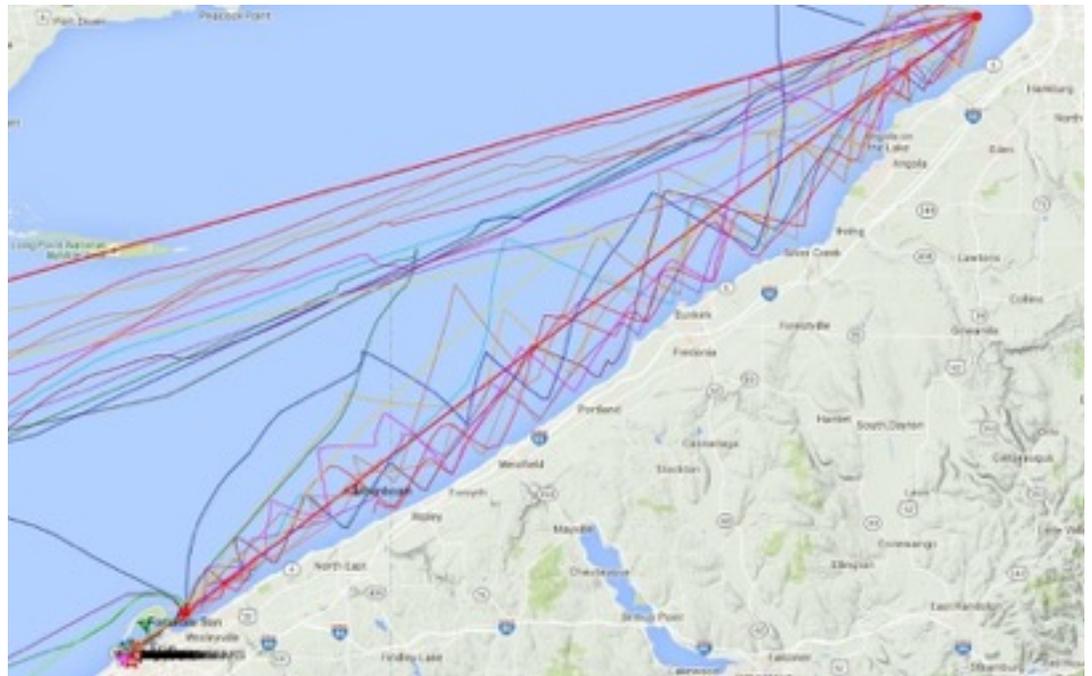
Past the Islands the winds and waves grew and the fleet started to pay attention to the weather forecast. Late Sunday to noon on Monday a cold front was forecast to move through with heavy west winds possibly to 40 knots. Of course the fleet had to endure a couple of windless

hours before the transition and the boats wallowed in the left over slop.

As the cold front approached the temps quickly dropped and the west winds built to 20 knots and then more. The ride was tough and the Lake Erie waves did their thing, building to eight feet. John Lubimir in Flight Risk lead the way rounding Buffalo around 0430 with Mac McKensie and Joey Baker trying to keep pace knowing well the Buffalo to Erie leg would have the wind on the nose.

The fleet by now had seen several boats seek shelter as going past Erie only to sail back into close to 30 knot winds and big waves did not appeal to all. What

they missed was a dead on beat with winds at the weather buoys reading 25 knots plus. Nobody argued that the waves were 8 feet and the boats constantly were flying off the tops of waves into the troughs with a big splash. The fleet was praying for a wind shift but it wouldn't happen and boats were throwing in a dozen tacks trying to stay near the rhumbline on the 16 or more hour beat from Buffalo.



Someone once said Lake Erie wasn't worthy of a GLSS Challenge but he has yet to sail one. Three boats from Lake Ontario

left with a great respect for Erie. For the 13 boats that finished this was a challenge to remember forever. 2016 will see the 10th Anniversary Lake Erie Solo Challenge and we hope everyone will come celebrate with us.



LIGHTHOUSE RUM CAKES

A SWEET ADDITION TO THE SOLO MAC

For the past 2 years, Solo Mac skippers have had a sweet addition to their dinner menu. Rumor had it that the skipper of BLUE SKYE asked his son, the developer of this treat, to donate one of these rum saturated cakes to each of his competitors to slow them down. Rich and moist, I enjoyed my Lighthouse Rum Cake (a slice at a time) all the way up the lake to Mackinac.

These Rum Cakes are great for the holidays and Jon is putting together Thanksgiving & Christmas orders. If you or anyone you know are interested in rum cakes or gift baskets pricing and more information can be found at www.lighthouseumcakes.com