



LOWER LAKE HURON SOLO CHALLENGE **6 SEPTEMBER 2008**

Entries for the 2008 Lower Huron Solo declined to only fifteen versus twenty two and twenty seven in the previous two years. On the good news side of the coin, of the fifteen, four were first time entries. A significant number of our regulars were absent for a myriad of reasons - injuries, boat problems, other family commitments and call-ins to work.

On Friday those coming up the river enjoyed the tail end of Hurricane Gustaf and a 35 knot following wind. There were white caps in the St. Clair River during the morning. Unfortunately one boat crossing Lake St. Clair experienced a genoa wrap, and subsequent shredding of the sail in the high winds, resulting in an entry withdrawal.

The weather forecast for Saturday was for a sunny day with light winds from the north with a brief spell of 10 knots early afternoon and then turning light northeasterly. On the way out to the start line we had "up to" 2 knots from the northwest. Mark and I talked about calling a short course. About 20 minutes before the first start we suddenly had 10 knots from the north. No more talk about a short course!

Our first (and only) "casualty" occurred just before the first start. Gerry Kraus on *Scrimshaw* unfortunately fouled his prop with one of his lines and had to be towed in. Gerry was a first time entrant last year and broke his seeing glasses early on in that race forcing him to retire. Hopefully these trials and tribulations will not put him off making another attempt next year and the third time will prove to be the charm!

The first leg of the race was a beat up to R12 in building waves. All the fleets were pretty close as we rounded mark at approximately 1015 to 1030 and set off on a close haul to the Kettle Point mark. On the leg to Kettle point the wind was between 10 and 15 knots with 2 to 3 foot waves. Great sailing! At approximately 1320 boats were obviously rounding the mark as I saw the first spinnaker on the horizon. I still had several miles to go.

The run back to the finish line was a sail not to be missed. With the sun beating down on us, it was a broad reach in up to 18 knots of wind and a nice wave action pushing the boats along with the occasional wave crashing against the starboard quarter into a refreshing spray. Fantastic!

Most of the boats were finished by 6pm, in plenty of time for the party at the Sarnia Yacht Club, with one exception. Late in the afternoon the wind started to die and Jane Hurst, competing in her first ever solo race, was becalmed at sun down about four miles from the finish. She told us to go ahead with the awards as she intended to stick it out on the lake. Jane finally crossed the line at 2307. Jane was elated at having finished the race and said she had a new appreciation of sailing and is looking forward to next year's event. She thoroughly deserves what turned out to be her second place finish.

Two of the first time entrants "cleaned up" in Spinnaker B Division, with Wesley Arthur taking first and Dave McVinnie finishing second. Both made the long trek from the south end of Lake St. Clair to participate.

While we do want to see a big boost in the number of entries for next year, the smaller number this year resulted in a cozy après race and awards ceremony in the Sarnia Yacht Club bar.

Special thanks go out to:

- Sarnia Yacht Club for the use of their facilities
- John and Joan Chorostecki for the start line committee.
- Marianne Clift for the finish line committee
- Adrienne Hughes for organizing the food.
- All the others who contributed in one-way or another.
- And last but no means least, all of you who took up the challenge to compete!

Tom Hughes

and

Mark Gutteridge