



Solo Challenger



Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society

Officers:

President: *Jim McLaren*
Vice President: *Bill Dembek*
Treasurer: *Blair Arden*
Recording Secretary: *Paul Schloop*
Corresponding & E-Mail Secretary: *Tony Driza*

Directors:

Erik Johnson *Matt Scharl*
Al Merrithew *Rob Robins*
Dan Pavlat *Alan Veenstra*

Spring 2004

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jim McLaren

Our first *Solo Challenger* of 2004 is indeed a **First**. In conjunction with the recent mailing which will, with your help, complete our e-mail contact list, the Solo Challenger will be posted on our website...and an e-mail note sent to everyone with the website link. It will be much easier to stay in touch with everyone, and save some dough in the process.

The 2004 AGM was a near record attendance! It was a great mix of old and new friends, and terrific to hear Tim Kent recount his Around Alone Adventures. In addition to the election of new Board members, it was overwhelmingly decided to hold the 2005 AGM in Chicago during Strictly Sail, so mark your calendars for the weekend of February 4th! We are working on a discount hotel/show pass package...this will be a great weekend of fun. Perhaps the **GLSS** should get a booth at Strictly Sail...would we have enough volunteers to cover a booth...?

The new Board of Directors met during Strictly Sail 2004. Alan Veenstra's Chicago Sailing Club had a booth, which proved to be a great spot for **GLSS** members from all over to meet and greet. Some Board Meeting highlights:

2004 Officers:

President: *Jim McLaren*
Vice President: *Bill Dembek*
Recording Secretary: *Paul Schloop*
Treasurer: *Blair Arden*
Corresponding Secretary: *Tony Driza*

2004 Open Houses Chair - Bill Dembek

Bill has the Huron Open House scheduled for March 28th, with some fresh new topics we will all enjoy!

2004 Mac Races Chair - Rob Robins

2004 Safety Equipment and Procedures Committee Chair - Blair Arden

2004 Communications Committee Chair - Alan Veenstra

The Safety Equipment and Procedures Committee has been established, in keeping with our charter, to review and advise on developments and improvements in these areas on an ongoing basis.

The Communications Committee is charged with evaluating any and all ways we may improve communications within our Society, amongst the Board members, and to others about the **GLSS**.

I strongly encourage you to contact any of these Chairs, or myself, with your ideas, thoughts, or suggestions in these areas.

Ours is a volunteer society bound together by the challenge and satisfaction we each derive in our own way from solo sailing. Contribution of your ideas, your time, or simply a friendly query or shared anecdote are always welcome, and go a long way toward keeping this a vibrant and lively group!

Our Schedule of Events for 2004/2005 was distributed at the AGM, and will shortly be up on the website (<http://webhost.sailnet.com/glss/>). This week's warm weather has reminded me that **JUNE 19TH** is only 16 weekends away...time to start making lists!

My Best to All,
Jim McLaren

*Please take a moment to send your updated email contact to:
tdriza@wmis.net!*

2003 Lake Michigan Solo Scramble

Dave Rearick

This year's Lake Michigan Solo Scramble brought 21 entries to the event from both sides of Lake Michigan. The 100-mile, overnight race begins in Racine, Wisconsin for the western shore participants and Holland, Michigan for those on the eastern shore. Both races head to the NOAA weather buoy at mid-lake and from there, onto the finish in Michigan City, Indiana.

For days prior to the start, the warm sunny weather provided great delivering conditions for the out of town racers, but the constant drone of the NOAA weather information kept anxiety high with predictions of 30-knot winds on the nose for the ride home. With 100 miles of fetch, those 30 knots usually bring with them 7'-9' seas adding to the anxieties, especially for those of us without dodgers.

The starts came off without a hitch thanks to the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club Race Committee along with Joe Turns and Rob Robins, and the Racine Yacht Club Race Committee along with Jim McLaren and Alan Veenstra. The reach to the weather buoy was a delightful romp with the exception of a few scattered rain showers that came and went. Boats began rounding the turn at midnight with boats from Racine reaching the mark first. At the time of my rounding, the four leaders from Holland arrived with three boats from Racine and we joined forces both on the radio and on the water for the long beat home. Fortunately, the weather forecast had only reached 18-20 knot gusts on the nose and the sail down to Michigan City went smoothly.

With great enthusiasm, nine new participants to the *GLSS* entered the race. Those that I talked with all have aspirations of competing in the Solo Macs in the coming years. Even more encouraging was the entry by Elizabeth Reichling, the first woman ever to enter a *GLSS* race on the Lake Michigan side. We hope to see Elizabeth and the others in the next Solo Mac.

At sun up, the winds began to decrease and the sailing became more like June weather than mid September. Dave Wagner and Mark Veenstra led the finishers in from the Racine start. As the afternoon came on, the winds increased and the finishers were met with 15-18 knots of wind on the nose at the Michigan City Gap. By late

afternoon, all finishers were in. While a few of the sailors took advantage of the brisk southerly breeze to turn for home after finishing, the remaining competitors were welcomed by Local sailors of the Michigan City Yacht Club and the two entities joined forces at the grills and at the Keg of beer generously donated by Bob Forney (Owner of *Geronimo*), in honor of Mike Silverthorne.

Congratulations to the competitors listed in order of corrected finish:

Racine Scramble

Mark Veenstra, *Monitor*
Bill Erdmann, *Harbor Haze*
Dave Wagner, *Gigi*
John Ayres, *Riptide*
Mike Hanson, *Solar Express*
Stan Foltz, *Our Little Amusement*
Rick Zawacki, *My III Sons*
Bob Graves, *Eleuthera*
Kent Kwiatt, *Wipper*
Joe Higgins, *Trav'ler*
Kevin Novak, *Pegasus*
Bill Hallaway, *Dauntless*

Holland Scramble

Dave Rearick, *Geronimo*
Paul Schloop, *Blue Max*
Francis Meehan, *Mojo*
Bill Smith, *Skyhigh*
Tony Driza, *Whoa Nellie*
Mark Perkins, *Journey*
Brian Vanwieren, *Zapada*
Elizabeth Reichling, *Night Hawk 3*
Mike Osborne, *Aftica*

All competitors received a *GLSS* Solo Scramble hat and the winner's hats were embroidered with their place of finish on the back. Each hat was also embroidered with the silhouette of a seagull in honor of Mike "Laughing Gull" Silverthorne.

Sailors being fierce traditionalists continued what has become a tradition since 9/11, when the Solo Scramble took place just a few days later in the wake of that historical event. Gathered around in a circle, the sailors from both the Michigan City Yacht Club and the *GLSS* ceremoniously open a bottle of Scotland's finest single malt and toss the cap away. A toast is passed around in honor of those that we sail with and for, and remember.

2003 St. Clair Solo What Fall Sailing Can Be Like

Well when it comes to fall sailing, conditions can range dramatically. Last year we had to shorten course due to very light winds after the start of the race and we drifted for hours before the wind filled in for a fast finish. This year was a different story with temperatures in the low 50s for several days prior to the race, many skippers decided to pass up the 44 mile Solo and entries fell to just 30 skippers. It is traditional for many of the boats to move to Crescent on Friday for the skippers meeting but 30 to 40 knot winds with higher gusts kept most boats in port, the 52 degree air didn't help either. Saturday morning found some of the Canadian fleet stuck in their marinas as the high winds had drained the southern portion of the lake. You just can't fit a 6-foot draft boat through a 3-foot deep marina exit no matter how bad you want to race. Sorry guys, we missed you out there. I know that those skippers were very disappointed that they were not out on the water to share the fun; none more so than our own co-race chair Dave Evans.

Two JAM, Four PHRF and one Multihull class answered the starting gun on a sunny and crisp Saturday morning with 15 to 20 knot winds out of the west. Spinnakers were set by some of the PHRF fleet but once they were farther out on the racecourse the increasing winds and gusty conditions caused most of them to replace the chute with a headsail. Those that did not douse the chute have the thanks from the rest of the fleet for providing the entertainment with accidental gybes and some great "dip the winches in the water" broaches. Winds continued to increase and the waves built presenting an exhilarating run to the Thames buoy in record time, but what goes down must now come up and a fifteen-mile bash upwind to R28 really started to separate the boats. An odd wave pattern gave a stutter step action on one tack and a fast wave slicing ride on the other, luckily the later was the favored tack. It was a blast! Once at R 28 all you needed to do was dodge the freighters and then crack off the sheets and power reach up to the finish off the Clinton River. As expected the multihull class ate up the course and finished early, the monohulls also had all boats in before 6:30PM. With mostly sunny skies and plenty of wind the St. Clair Solo was a great ride and the perfect wrap up for the sailing

season. Next stop was North Star Sail Club for dinner and awards.

Although the weather may change each year there is one certainty about the St. Clair Solo and that is the Big Al "all the steak you can eat" dinner. Once again Al Merrithew assisted by Jim Ratliff and a host of volunteers put on a great steak dinner, no one ever goes away from this hungry. There is more work to putting on this dinner than meets the eye and our thanks go to Al for doing it year after year.

Within two days after the race the temperatures were back into the high 60's with bright sunshine and excellent fall sailing conditions, may these conditions line up with the 2004 St. Clair Solo. It will be held on October 2nd, mark your calendars now!

Thanks again to all our volunteers and the best of luck to our skippers until the 2004 sailing season from:

Dave Evans & Dan Pavlat

The following article submitted by Mike Mahar shows that there is quite a difference experienced in the same race. Mike's recap is more along the lines of "There I was..."

2003 Lake St. Clair Solo Race

The Lake St. Clair Solo race is held every fall, closing out the racing calendar of the *GLSS*. The race starts early, as it's a thirty-eight mile event. If everything goes as planned the contestants can finish the race and make it to "Big Al's" steak dinner and collect their awards. The dinner and awards are held at NSSC, (North Star Sail Club) about a mile up the Clinton River from the finish line.

For those of you that know Lake St. Clair, the race starts off of CSYC (Crescent Sail Yacht Club), making short bootlegs around the North end of the "dumping grounds" (tailing from dredging the freighter channel up the lake) and heading east for the Thames River middle channel buoy. From there you head north-northeast to a buoy on the freighter channel, turn north up into Anchor Bay and finish off the Clinton River buoy. For those of you that don't know Lake St. Clair, the course is a big "V" with a little bootleg for the start, a bigger bootleg to

get you up into Anchor Bay, and the bottom of the “V” pointing east at the Thames River buoy.

Motoring down from Great Lakes Yacht Club to CSYC, I realized that the weatherman’s prediction was accurate. Wind was brisk out of the west-northwest from fifteen to twenty-five miles per hour. The sky was clear with excellent visibility, a beautiful clear fall day - great football weather! The waves were only running about a foot since the start was on windward side of the lake. The starting line ran from CSYC seawall to a buoy one hundred yards off shore. The start was off the wind, a reach to a broad reach on port tack, making it a spinnaker start for the boats racing in PHRF.

Pre-setting the pole and spinnaker gear I was ready for the start. Rule number one in yacht racing is hit the starting line with speed on time. Easier said than done! I had a good clean start and seeing the other boats go for their spinnakers I followed suit. The chute went up ok and the boat took off on close reach. Remember everything gets long and involved when you’re single-handed. When I went to roll in the headsail my first problem started.

Some people swear by them, others swear at them - roller furling! Personally I swear by them, but today I was going to be swearing *at* it. When I released the Genoa sheet to roll up the furler, the slacked sail slapped forward and jammed into the end of the spinnaker pole. My “frigging frog rigging” had me again! A little side note here, my boat is a Jeanneau 34.7 of 1987 vintage. The sail could only be rolled up about seventy percent of the way. I didn’t even realize I had a problem until I tried to bring the pole back. It wouldn’t budge!

So here I am on the first bootleg with about mile to go to the first mark. Neck-to-neck with three other boats in my start, when I realized that I had a problem. After a quick trip to the bow I saw what had happened. The sail was stuck between the plunger and the C-end of the spinnaker pole. Here’s where one of my other favorite modern wonders of sailing comes into play, the auto helm!

Under these conditions my auto helm would only keep control of the boat for a couple of minutes at best. As I proceeded further out into the lake, I left the lee of the land behind; the wind was a lot stronger and the waves began to build. It’s gets real scary to be on the bow when a boat

starts to round up or jibe. Now that I knew my predicament, I decided to *just sail the boat!* It wasn’t really hurting me yet, since we were all on a reach. The real problem would begin when I had to bear off after rounding the first mark to head dead down wind to the Thames River Light. With all my difficulties I was still the lead yacht in our start to around the first mark, but I couldn’t bear off to go down wind due to my spinnaker pole. When I tried to sail the course for the second leg the spinnaker would collapse behind the mainsail. That left me sailing twenty to thirty degrees higher than the other boats.

This gave me separation from the other yachts, which was a good thing; I didn’t want to hit any one while I was out of the cockpit. Every time that I went forward the boat would start to lose control. In these conditions, the auto helm is too slow to react to the change of course from the following seas, so when it does correct, it over corrects. The first time it corrects, the boat comes back on course and over swings a little. The second time, it over swings a little more. By the third or fourth time it’s spinning the boat out of control.

Well I had to do something to get out of this mess so I decided to ease the pole forward to the head stay while the roller furling was released. Doing this I made another dash up to the bow. Still, I couldn’t free the Genoa from the spinnaker pole, there was still too much of a load on the pole. This is where I made my real big mistake!

In retrospect I should have just taken the spinnaker down! Instead I tried to “free fly” the spinnaker by slacking the guy. Wrong! The spinnaker instantly wrapped around the headstay and the partially rolled up Genoa. Well, at least I could free the Genoa from the pole now. Now I had an even bigger problem, the dreaded spinnaker wrap!

This going back and forth to the bow was getting crazy. Aye, I know what you guys are thinking? Yes, I was staying clipped for the most part, occasionally I would get so tangled up the only thing to do was sit down, unclip and clip to the jack line again. My spinnaker was beyond wrapped! I had that sinking and defeated feeling, and realized I was in deep do-do. The winds were up in the high teens gusting into the mid-twenties. All of the other boats in my start were flying down the lake leaving me in their

wakes. Now I realized how a guy like Mike Silverthorne could end up attached to a beached boat. Another little note for those that don't know, Mike Silverthorne died during a similar local GLSS race on Lake Michigan.

A few thoughts went through my mind - don't do anything stupid, *don't fall off the boat*, maybe it's time to call the race Committee and drop out of this race. Then mixture of common sense and Corinthian spirit hit me. "Yes, I can call and drop out, but that won't get the spinnaker down." "You have over fifteen miles to the Thames River Buoy." "What would I do on Lake Huron in these conditions!" "1-800-HELP! I don't think so!" One of the nice things about solo sailing you can talk to yourself as loud as you want!

Looking at the fleet I was way north (port) of the lay-line, so I decided to gybe before going forward again. At least the pole was down and I had the boat under control now. So I gybed the boat and got it sailing safely on the auto helm, before heading for the bow again. The waves were building, three to four feet; they never really get big on Lake St. Clair as the lake lacks the fetch and depth needed for big waves. For those of you who don't know Lake St. Clair intimately it's a hundred square mile, shallow pond for the most part. It's the reason Lake St. Clair has a freighter channel and "dumping grounds".

So here I am hooked to the bow, going downwind around seven to eight miles per hour, pulling and tugging on the wrapped spinnaker. Then I had a "brain fart", since I can't get the spinnaker down because it's wrapped around the headsail, why don't I try pulling both sails down? It worked; tug by tug the headsail and wrapped spinnaker slowly came down. Holy shit!

Out of the corner of my eye I saw the stern of one of the boats in my start. He was only about sixty feet in front of me. A lot closer than I wanted to be while I am up on the bow. It also made me realize that I wasn't out of this race, yet. So I cleared the fore deck, hung my 100% jib, got it poled out and felt like a yacht racer again. Wing in wing, I was quickly catching two of the boats in my start and holding my own on Charlie Horner on Sleeping Tiger. Charlie wasn't sleeping though; he had managed to keep his spinnaker up and flying and had a huge lead

on me - like miles! A blip on the horizon. He was the only boat in our start to keep his chute flying!

Knowing Charlie and his boat I knew I still had chance to catch the old boy. Half rolled up headsails don't aren't very effective going up wind and I had my boat set up to go up wind in these conditions. By the time I got down to the Thames River buoy I had almost caught up with my other two competitors. Here's where rule number two of yacht racing comes into play - *don't sail in a header*. Turning the corner I put the bow into the wind and took it on the chin. The wind was up over twenty and waves were as big as they would get since Thames River buoy was at the leeward end of the lake. I love it when the waves break over the bow and wash the deck. Settling into a rhythm, I started picking my way through the waves and reading the wind shifts.

After several tacks I crossed a couple of boat lengths behind one of the yachts in my start. After a few more I was hundred yards ahead of him. One down and two to go! Charlie Horner and "Schlepping Tiger" were up there somewhere. I had a lot of ground to make up. One of the boats in my start followed me for a while; when I tacked he tacked, this went on for a few tacks and he was holding his own on me. After half a dozen more tacks he gave up on me, I tacked out of a header. He continued and when we crossed again, he was over half a mile behind me.

The next problem was finding the mark on the freighter channel; there wasn't any parade to follow. Eventually I found the mark and over stood it a little more than I would have liked to. The other thing affecting me was that the breeze began to die. The last leg was a one sided beat up into Anchor Bay; I could see Charlie ahead of me and realized he had me. There wasn't enough racecourse left to catch him. In the lulls I was underpowered with the 100% jib and couldn't make good speed anymore.

For the last couple of miles I worked at catching a Shark that was in front of me, he kept working that boat to get every tenth of speed he could. But with my longer water line and more hull speed I finally passed him. We passed to windward close enough to shout questions and answers about the finish line to each other. The wind had continued to die, going down in to low

teens even single digits as I crossed the line at the buoy end. Thank you Race Committee, that horn was a sweet sound!

Mike Mahar

Communications Update

The most recently corrected *GLSS* membership list shows 149 members, scattered over twelve states, and a goodly number residing across the border in Canada as well. Our AGM, and scheduled races give us an opportunity to catch up with old friends, and swap a few tall tales. Unfortunately, there are members who can't make it to the events very often, and they have to rely on our website, and the *Solo Challenger* for news of what is going on in the *GLSS*. Of the 149 members, we have email addresses for 75, and we have no contact information at all for eight of our members. The days of getting together in any substantial number are pretty limited, but by making use of the internet, we can not only keep the membership informed on what's happening within the *GLSS*, but we can save some significant "dough" in doing so.

To put out an issue of the *Solo Challenger* to the dues paying members is fairly time intensive. There are articles to solicit, formatting them into the issue, running off to have them printed, a side trip to Office Max for the envelopes, folding & stuffing them, applying the postage.... you get the idea. And while we've held the line on dues, the cost of everything else keeps climbing all the time.

Beginning with this issue, we're going to head for the electronic age, which should be a big boon for us all. We'll be able to communicate in a much more timely fashion, and include things (hopefully) such as pictures in future issues that are posted on the website. This will be the final issue that is mailed out to the masses as it were; it's going to everyone on the Master List. We'll still mail future issues to dues paying members who can't receive the information via the Internet – but with printing costs what they are, they won't have the pictures or color added. ***Most importantly, it will be up to the member to make the choice as to which manner the Solo Challenger is received – the default mode will be to view it on the website. You will have to contact us if you still prefer to have it mailed!*** As a new issue is posted on the website, we'll

simply send you an email with a link to take you to the website, where you may view or print the issue at your convenience. In fact anytime there is some new information to be shared, we'll get it up on the website as a *Rode Show* or simply a notice, and send out an email informing you of the new information. We won't be clogging up your email box with a bunch of stuff – but please modify your "Spam-killers/firewalls to accept email from us (tdriza@wmis.net).

Like anything else, there may be some growing pains to suffer through before we truly get it right. I'm the poster child for what can go wrong with computers having had a hard drive crash, and also battling a few viruses along the way. We'd like your input on how you think things are looking, as we're certainly open for suggestions. For starters, if you can help us with contact info for:

*Bill Babel
Norm Bauman
Ramon Jacobs
Bob Krieg
Johan Pedersen
Andrew Pietrowski
Charles Riley
Harry Whale*

If you happen to know the whereabouts of these sailors, please drop us a note, or have them get in contact with us.

Lastly, in a shameless plug to increase the dues paying members of the *GLSS*, if you haven't paid your dues for 2004, please consider doing so. The primary benefit is to maintain your voting rights, and have a voice in the direction that the *GLSS* takes. The dues have held steady as of late, so it's a genuine bargain at only \$30.00. Please make checks payable to the *GLSS*, and send it to *GLSS, P.O. Box 36933, Grosse Pte. Farms, MI 48236*.

For those who missed out on them last year, we have a few 2003 Annual Yearbooks (25th Anniversary Edition) left. They are well done, and a nice addition to your history of the GLSS. If you are interested in one, drop me an email, and I'll get one to you. There are about 25 left, so supplies are limited! Contact Tony Driza at tdriza@wmis.net if you are interested! I'll try and get them to the Annual Open House, yet another incentive to go!!

Upcoming Events

***March 28, 2004
Annual Open House at North
Star Sail Club
Harrison Twp, MI
Noon – 3 PM
Contact Bill Dembek at
willkdem@aol.com for details.***

***June 19, 2004
26th Annual Port Huron –
Mackinac Solo Challenge
8th Annual Chicago – Mackinac
Solo Challenge***

***Check the website:
<http://webhost.sailnet.com/glss/apps.htm>
for details!***

***Mark Your Calendars and Have a
Great Sailing Season!***

Tony Driza

The Last Word



***First This..(Pegasus, sometimes sailed by Rob
Robins....)***

Then This....



***Makes it all worthwhile...Have a great season,
may your splashings go well and happen soon!***