



# Solo Challenger



*Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society*

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**Winter 2004**

## A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Jim McLaren*

What a great Fall! The weather was spectacular and the GLSS was in full swing. The Lower Huron and Solo Scramble were all that we are about: Starts which are *never* uneventful, weather which is *always* (somehow) a challenge and, best of all, the fun and camaraderie of sharing the accomplishments after the finish of each event.

On this year's Solo Scramble the East Division was plagued with unrelenting light air, pushing their ETA well into late Saturday night. With no relief in sight by midday Saturday, most of the East Division decided they'd had enough "fun" for one weekend. Did they head for home? Heck no! They motored on down to Michigan City for our Saturday night Pier Party! A great time was had by old and new alike and, while some of us were brutally over served (no doubt by our wonderful host Dave Rearick), the lasting bonds that form from sharing these experiences were once again just great fun to be part of and enjoy.

Then along came the St Clair Solo!! How 'bout the usual excitement of Fall sailing on the Lakes, and toss in an editor from *SAIL* magazine (complete with photographer!) on board to write about singlehanded sailing of the amateur/weekend warrior variety?! Thanks to Dan Pavlat, Josh Adams from *SAIL*, raced the SCS on *Taz* and, from all reports, we'll be reading about the GLSS in the January 2005 issue!

That's about all for now? Not by a long shot!! While this great Fall schedule was underway your Board was finishing up terrific arrangements for our first AGM in Chicago...and our first presence at a major national Boat Show!

<b><i>In this Issue:</i></b>	
<i>President's Message</i>	<i>Page 1</i>
<i>Trans Superior Update</i>	<i>Page 2</i>
<i>St. Clair Solo Recap</i>	<i>Page 2</i>
<i>Who's On Watch</i>	<i>Page 3</i>
<i>Sail Saga</i>	<i>Page 4</i>
<i>OSTAR Update</i>	<i>Page 5</i>
<i>2005 Mac Solo Challenges</i>	<i>Page 6</i>
<i>Board of Director Vacancies</i>	<i>Page 6</i>
<i>Calendar of Events</i>	<i>Page 6</i>

### *The AGM*

By an overwhelming vote at last year's meeting we decided to hold the 2005 AGM in Chicago on the weekend of Strictly Sail. **The date is February 5, 2005. The place is Maggiano's Restaurant** (516 N. Clark St, Chicago), which, coincidentally, is a brisk few blocks from Strictly Sail @ Navy Pier! The entertainment will be provided by the usual cast of outlandish members, as well as our speaker, Kip Stone, winner of the Transat Open 50 Class, who has agreed to share with us his experiences in both preparation and execution. The full AGM packets are being prepared, and will be mailed to you late this month with all the details. It promises to be a splendid evening, and I would

encourage you to RSVP promptly, as the early returns indicate a very well attended event!

**Strictly Sail Show**

We have a GLSS Booth at the Show, including six Exhibitor Passes! Erik Johnson is spearheading our efforts to coordinate the plans for displays, signage, hand-outs, and staffing. We need LOTS of help with volunteers and ideas for our booth!! Please contact Erik (586-707-2084), Tony Driza [tdriza@wmis.net](mailto:tdriza@wmis.net) , or me ([jmclaren@lbppaper.com](mailto:jmclaren@lbppaper.com)) if you can help make our first Strictly Sail booth a big success. The AGM mailing will also have an “opportunity” to volunteer and help: The more Members we have on hand, the better the fun will be! Please be on the lookout for your AGM packet in the mail, and I hope everyone will be able to make it.

My best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season, and I look forward to seeing you at the AGM!

Best regards,  
Jim.

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**Trans Superior Race Update**

*Tony Driza*

● Every other year since 1969, the  
● Trans Superior Race has been held  
● on that coldest and largest body of  
● fresh water in North America, Lake  
● Superior. The race starts from the  
● Gros Cap Light in Whitefish Bay  
● near Sault Ste. Marie, Canada and  
● finishes by the North Pier of the  
● Duluth, Minnesota shipping canal  
● while holding the tip of the  
● Keweenaw Peninsula to port. The  
● rhumb line for the race is  
● approximately 380 statute miles.

Next year being one of those “every other years” the race will take place on **August 6, 2005**. GLSS members Eric Thomas, Dan Pavlat and Dick Lappin have been working hard to incorporate a singlehanded division, which will be a cooperative effort between the GLSS and

the Trans Superior race officials (Duluth Yacht Club, Lake Superior Yachting Association, and the Algoma Sailing Club).

***It is proposed that the Constitution of the GLSS be modified to allow a solo skipper who meets the preliminary requirements and finishes the Trans Superior race to be acknowledged, and in the case of a first time finisher, be issued membership in the GLSS.***

The proposal was accepted at the December Board of Directors meeting, and has its endorsement. A copy of the proposal has been emailed to all GLSS members with valid email addresses, and will be included in the forthcoming invitation to the AGM, scheduled for February 5, 2005. All members with dues paid for 2005 may vote on this (and any other proposals) at the meeting, or via the proxy, which will be included in the AGM mailing. It will take a three-fourths majority of GLSS members in good standing for the proposal to pass.

Interested parties can point their web browsers to [www.transsuperior.com](http://www.transsuperior.com) for more information. Please contact **Dick Lappin** at [rlappin@i2k.com](mailto:rlappin@i2k.com), **Dan Pavlat** at [jdavlat@peoplepc.com](mailto:jdavlat@peoplepc.com), or Eric Thomas at [SAILDOGS@aol.com](mailto:SAILDOGS@aol.com). This is a tremendous opportunity for a truly great singlehanded sailing challenge!

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**St. Clair Solo Recap**

*Mike Mahar*

Like most sailors I follow the weather forecast. For almost a week the NOAA web site was saying we would get snotty weather for the season ending GLSS Lake St. Clair Solo Race. And as we all know, the closer to the day, the better the weather prediction, but it still amazes me how accurate they can be a week in advance. The forecast was wind and rain in the morning and clearing through the day. That was NOAA’s story and they were sticking to it.

Six of us from Great Lake Yacht Club met at the local diner to caffeine and carbohydrate up before braving the elements outside. Over coffee and breakfast we discussed what else: the weather and head sail choices for the regatta. We all voted on 100% jibs as the wind rattled the windows of the restaurant. And that sure proved to be the right call!

From GLYC to Crescent Sail Yacht Club is about a three-mile trip down the lake in the dark, due to the overcast and the steady drizzle. The start was off the sea wall of CSYC sending us across the lake on a close reach to the thirty-foot high concrete day marker on the freighter channel, labeled R-14 on the charts. Hitting the line a little late, I was wondering: where is every one? Did I go over the line on the five-minute warning? What is happening? So I got on the radio and asked the race committee. GLSS member Dan Pavlat was the Principle Race Officer and nice enough to let me know I wasn't early and yes, I did have the right start. Several minutes later I heard the all clear for our start over the radio. Back to rule number one in yacht racing: hit the line with speed on time. Easier said than done!

From R-14 to the Thames River buoy was a broad to close reach but with the winds up near twenty knots and at times gusting to thirty I only saw one brave sailor try to fly a spinnaker, and that didn't last long! For me the fun was flying along at hull speed, trying to surf waves.

The Thames River is at the other end of the lake, eighteen miles away; the waves and wind grew the closer you got to the mark. The wind also started backing more toward the west making the last couple of mile almost dead down wind for me. I could have put the chute up at this point or went wing and wing, but looking back every one else was playing it conservative, so I just sailed deep as possible.

Just before the Thames River buoy one of the trimarans whistled by me flying a small rooster tail. Right behind me there was the boat I passed earlier and another boat was stuck in irons having some kind of problems near the mark. Why is it that when you get to a mark, company always show up? One thing about singlehanded racing is you like plenty of room. Since you can't steer and work the sails at the same time a lot of times you don't have complete control of the boat. Going down the checklist, halyards, backstay, outhaul, jib sheets, main sheet, reef lines, I prepared to round the red and white buoy.

This is where the real fun begins! The boat heeled over on its side as I headed *Miriah* up to a beat and wrestled with getting a reef in the main. The inverse law of yachting racing was taking affect, what goes down wind must come back up wind. I knew there was a reason gentlemen

never sail upwind! The rounding and reefing went smoothly and next I tried to figure out if I was in a header or lift. One nice thing about sailing up wind in waves and wind the deck gets a good bath and my boat sure needed it. This was the longest leg of the race the beat up to R-28. Trading tacks with other boats in the fleet while we all try to find the shortest route upwind in the gusty and shifting conditions was challenging.

The wind slowly started to ease and smooth out over the afternoon and when the wind went down to ten knots I knew it was time to shake out the reef. For a while the boat didn't have enough power to get through the waves left over from earlier in the day. At times the boat speed dropped to under four knots and I started have second thought about my selection of the 100% headsail.

About two miles from R-28 I crossed paths with our guest sailor Josh Adams from Sail magazine. Josh was sailing on *TAZ*, a Tartan 10 owned by Dan Pavlat and Larry Petersen. Dan and Larry were nice enough to let Josh use their boat in exchange for the GLSS getting an article written about us in *Sail* magazine. We were both trying to get around R-28 for the last leg to the finish line. At this time I was pretty sure of having a first in my class unless *Miriah* had some kind of catastrophic failure. Now I just wanted to beat *TAZ* on overall corrected time. In the end we both took first in our classes but *TAZ* beat me in corrected time.

After rounding R-28 it was lopsided beat, close reach to the finish line. In a loose pack four of us - *TAZ*, *R Escape*, *Ratso* and *Miriah* chased each other to the finish line. Adjusting sail trim and steering to get the most out of our steeds, the four us raced to the Clinton River buoy. The gusts were gone and winds had died down to about fifteen knots and the sun shining. This was sailing at it finest! From a cold, wet dark morning to a beautiful fall afternoon.

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### ***Who's on Watch?***

*Mark Perkins*

The day was hot and still; it was Sunday morning as I came out of Michigan City from a *DNF* of the 2004 Solo Scramble. There almost seemed to be a little puff of air, but raising sails

only slowed me down. So, back down with the sails and power up the diesel for the ten-hour motor back to Holland.

With the sun above and just behind there was no hiding from it in the cockpit, even under the dodger. So it appeared to be the only option was let the autopilot take me home as I stayed below out of the heat. The rhumb line kept me well off shore as I regularly peeked out for other boats. Shall we say it was pretty quiet. Saw a few boats at a distance. Breakfast and a couple naps interfaced with reading. In hindsight, it was probably not the best idea to nap in the aft cabin. With the engine running and the radio playing, I was pretty remote from the outside. So when I awoke and went forward, it surprised me to see someone in the cockpit.

The dark blue uniform with the gun, etc. was a dead giveaway. The good news was I surprised him as I emerged up the companionway. Should say I scared the beegeebies out of him. Come to find out, someone reported a runaway boat motoring north off South Haven. He had just boarded and fortunately I woke up before he woke me up. We discussed the “on watch” concept; he looked at a life jacket and flare, and talked about his new Whaler as he filled out the boarding report. They motored along beside and I never slowed or altered course. Back into their boat they went with one more “on watch” comment. I stayed in the cockpit until they were out of site. It’s always good to have a little excitement.

So the next time you go below to grab some sleep, set the alarm on the radar.

*S/V Journey*

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### ***Sail Saga*** *Tony Driza*

The 2004 Chicago–Mackinac and Port Huron Mackinac Solo Challenges had their fair share, and perhaps then some, of gear busting weather. A few sails wound up in the scrap heap as winds either blew them out or wrapped them around the closest piece of rigging; a couple of them wound up in Lake Michigan. One went to the bottom off of Chicago in a dismasting, and the other, an asymmetric chute, was launched off of the pitching deck of a Catalina 38, *Sky High*, in the

wee hours of the second day of the race. The latter sail took a most amazing journey before ultimately being reunited with its owner, Bill Smith.

In the early Sunday morning hours (why is it always pitch black when the worst things happen?) of the Chicago-Mackinac Solo Challenge, skipper Bill Smith was busily doing a sail change. He was roughly three or four miles off of the Michigan coastline between Port Sheldon and Grand Haven when he made the decision to take the spinnaker down and unfurl the genoa in the building south-westerly. The spinnaker was lowered, bagged and secured to the bow pulpit uneventfully, and Bill went aft to unfurl and trim the genoa. Looking forward, he could see that the genoa sheet was fouled under the bag and another trip to the bow was in order to clear it. To do so, Bill had to unclip the bag; when the task had been accomplished, he re-clipped the bag, but just secured one of the bag clips before proceeding aft again to re-trim the sheet. With sails trimmed and boat under control, Bill then headed back forward to clean up the foredeck mess. What he found was right up there with dropping your laptop overboard while loading the boat – one clip was on the bow pulpit, the bag and the spinnaker were gone. Not the happiest of moments as sailmakers rarely give these things away, and the remainder of the race was forecast to be a downwind affair. Bill made the best of the situation though, and dutifully slogged his way north until a rudder problem forced him to withdraw from the race, and proceed to Frankfurt to have it corrected.

While Bill was stopped cold in Frankfurt, the submerged sail kept on trucking. A few miles to the southeast of where the sail escaped lays a massive cooling water intake for the power plant at Port Sheldon. With the zebra mussel problem, it must be cleaned fairly regularly, and about seven to ten days after losing the chute overboard, divers found it while servicing the intake. The divers contacted the sailmaker, who in turn referred them to the dealer where Bill had purchased *Sky High*. The dealer attempted to get in touch with Bill, but was unable to do so as Bill was out of town. They did, however, manage to contact Bill’s good friend and fellow GLSS member Joe Turns, and Joe took up the chase by contacting the divers.

Divers, salvage, and parting with big piles of folding money, seem to go hand in hand; the

scenario appeared to be heading in that direction as Joe haggled with them to recover the sail. The divers initial demand was such that Bill could have nearly had a new one. After being wrapped around the intake for a week, and filled with sand and zebra mussels, this sail looked like many things, new not being the first thing that came to mind. Closer examination revealed that although it looked a mess, there was actually very little wrong with it; while divers may know decompression times like the back of their hands, it became apparent to Joe that they didn't spend their off hours moonlighting in a sail loft. As the negotiating wore on, the price fell like the stock market in '29. Before long, they were practically telling Joe to get it out of their building, at a token recovery price. Home to Indiana it went where the sail spent a couple days being tended in a Jacuzzi by Joe's wife Cindy, who dutifully managed to remove the zebra mussels and sand before sending it back to the sailmakers who replaced the bag, and made some necessary repairs to the sail. Bill reports that other than a couple of minor stains, the spinnaker flies again!

As Paul Harvey would say: *"And now you know the rest of the story!"*

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## ***2005 Faraday Mill OSTAR***

*Tony Driza*

By any name, the OSTAR is a great race with beginnings traced back to 1960 and a half crown bet between Blondie Hasler and Francis Chichester. There are approximately 20 entries from five countries for the 2005 start to date; it is anticipated that ultimately 30 to 40 boats will participate. This year's race sanctioned by the Royal Western Yacht Club will consist mainly of Corinthian sailors, in contrast to the 2004 event, which featured largely professional sailors.

The GLSS has a long association with the OSTAR, as over the years GLSS members have participated in the event. Steve Pettingill, Phil Rubright, Dave Evans, Jim Otten and Ray Mason have all competed in the event, and in the '96 race, Phil took a third place. GLSS members also helped the skippers with deliveries to Europe; Tom Munson, Bob VanEck, Phil LePage, Kevin Hogan, Greg Doty and Wayne Gould have all made crossings, Kevin and Wayne doing it twice. It was in the 2000 race that Phil was tossed about the cabin of *Shamwari*

and suffered broken ribs and a dislocated knee. Jim Otten, hearing of Phil's predicament was diverting to him, only to be beaten by the Greek freighter *Alpha Intelligence* who took Phil aboard for the last 2/3 of the trip to the States.

Rubright, Evans and Hogan are competing in the 2005 version, which starts off Plymouth, England and runs 3,000 miles to a finish off of Newport, RI. The faster boats are looking at a crossing time of around 18 days or so, and the smaller yachts will be staring at a time frame of some 4 to 5 weeks.

While the race doesn't start until May 29, preparations are in high gear already. Phil Rubright has acquired a Frers 45 that he has just delivered to Charleston, SC; prepping of the boat is now underway and Phil anticipates a departure date of April 10 for Plymouth, with a stopover in the Azores (Horta). Dave will be departing from St. Augustine, Florida, and Kevin will be launching eastward from Charleston, like Phil. GLSS member Bob Reaume was planning on making the trip over on Dave's boat, but due to a serious illness from which he is recovering (and I'm told nicely), he'll be unable to make the crossing.

For more information on the race, point your internet browsers to the Faraday Mill OSTAR website:

<http://www.faradaymillostar2005.co.uk/index.cfm?page=news&action=detail&newsid=6>

As the countdown to the deliveries and the start of the start proceeds, watch the Solo Challenger, and possibly Rode Shows for further updates. Most of us will never compete in one of these races, but it's fun to watch, especially knowing that these sailors came from our ranks!

Dave Evans does have some merchandise for sale; I'm hoping that he has it at the AGM for our perusal!

***Good luck to all of the  
skippers competing in the  
race, particularly our  
GLSS members!***

