



# *THE GLSS SOLO CHALLENGER*

*The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society  
Spring 2014 – Mark Mahowald ([glsswebmaster@gmail.com](mailto:glsswebmaster@gmail.com)) editor  
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This edition of the Solo Challenger has a letter from our newly minted GLSS President heading up page 2, GLSS mentoring ideas on page 3, examples of the range of boats in the GLSS on page 4, a pitch to get the record times up off the website on page 5, and we wrap up with some GLSS member adventures: one in the Caribbean 600, and the second being the story of one GLSS members trip around Cape Horn.

We are only a couple of Months away from the SoloMac starts on June 21. This year the events include the SuperMac and SuperMac and Back challenges as well. Entry forms and race details are posted off the website at: <http://www.solosailors.org/allmac.php> We look forward to a great turnout this year !

There has been a good deal of work done on the website with numerous new articles added to the education and safety area (<http://www.solosailors.org/safety.php>), and a revised FAQ, with docking instructions for the events and many other useful tips (<http://www.solosailors.org/about.php>). Special thanks go out to Bill Tucker for putting a lot of work into these materials.

# From the Helm

Ken Verhaeren GLSS President

A year ago Rick McLaren talked about the onset of spring and impact of low water levels in the Great Lakes. This year the question is, "Will spring ever come?" And that is quickly followed by, "when will the ice melt"? At over 90% ice cover the Great Lakes region certainly has seen a hard freeze. The benefit of our harsh winter is the water levels are up, with Lake Michigan 13" over a year ago. I'm sure we are all eager to check out those water levels and start our sailing season. And what a great season this will be. Avoiding icebergs may be the real challenge of the Solo Mac

This is the year of the long Challenges and starts off in June with the Solo Mac, Super Mac and the longest challenge we have, the Super Mac & Back. But that is only the start of the long Challenge season. The Lake Ontario 300 will run in July and this year add a second lap for our 1<sup>st</sup> Ontario 600. August brings us both the Lake Erie Solo Challenge and the Superior 600. Our skills and endurance will again be put to the test. Are you ready? Get the boat ready, start planning the menu and get the paperwork in for these extended Challenges. With the GLSS board's approval, tracking for this year's events will be done by Kattack. We are working with them to develop tracking for all of our events. The plans include not only the Mac & Lake Erie Challenges but also all of our smaller events. The only exception is the Lake Ontario Challenge because that sponsor requires a different system. Last year's board eliminated the requirement for entrants in the Mac Challenges to have SPOT's for tracking, but the board also felt that tracking was not only good for our participants but also for their families and friends. The new system still uses the SPOT transmitter so all we will need is their "shared page" to enter into the system. It also benefits the GLSS in increasing our presence to other sailors. I look forward to seeing the Lower Lake Huron and Lake Michigan Scramble being tracked with Kattack. Let me end this with my main goal for this year. All GLSS members earned a lifetime membership when they completed their Challenge. That does not mean they are active members. That only comes by paying the yearly dues. I would like to see us increase those active members. I hope to see our active membership go over the 150 mark. It may also encourage some of our friends to join us for another challenge. So let's talk to our GLSS friends and see if they renewed their membership for the year. And add, "Why don't you do the Solo this year?"

Please feel free to contact me either by email or phone. My main interest is to represent you to the GLSS Board. I am always open to ideas for the betterment of our society. You can reach me at [verhaerenk@att.net](mailto:verhaerenk@att.net) or 708 253 7948

See you on the lakes,

Ken Verhaeren  
GLSS President

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# GLSS Mentoring

By Bill Tucker

Many of us have been asked by a fellow sailor what was involved in doing a GLSS Solo Challenge or just doing some solo or shorthanded sailing. Over the last year we have modified the web and added some articles to help you better answer your friend's questions and provide him or her with some resources. Many of these resources were available on the web but were just hard to find.

There is not a menu item on the left hand side of the home page labeled "Education & Safety". This page is organized by subject and includes the following general categories:

- The Basics - start here
- Deck Layout, Rigging, Sails, & Sail Handling
- Clothing: Staying Warm & Dry
- Self-Steering: Autopilots and Windvanes
- Sleep and Watch Keeping
- Food, Cooking and Provisioning
- Safety, Staying Onboard, Medical, Etc.
- Electronics: GPS, Plotters, Radar, AIS, SPOT, etc., etc.
- Electrical System: Battery, Alternator, Lights, Monitors, etc.
- Solo Challenge, Voyage Summary, Planning (Less than 300 NM)
- Solo Challenge, Voyage Summary, Planning (Greater than 300 NM)
- Other Stuff

There are a few articles, presentations, and links under each category. Items on this page have been extracted from past Solo Challengers, Road Show articles, and items posted on various other web pages. We are always looking for more so forward your articles to Mark Mahowald ([glsswebmaster@gmail.com](mailto:glsswebmaster@gmail.com)) our web master.

If someone is interested in doing a Solo Challenge a great way to start the education process is by reading the article under "The Basics" heading: 20 Steps to the Starting Line.

([http://www.solosailors.org/pdfs/20\\_Steps\\_to\\_the\\_Start\\_Line.pdf](http://www.solosailors.org/pdfs/20_Steps_to_the_Start_Line.pdf)) This paper was originally written by Patrick Nugent in January to June 2002 editions of the Rode Show as a step by step guide to prepare to do a Solo Mac. In 2013 Dan Pavlat and Bill Tucker combined Pat's articles into a single document, updated various sections, and made it generally applicable to all the Solo Challenges.

Another resource in the race documents posted on the web for each race. These documents are typically left on the web until they are replaced in the spring for the race the following summer. Even though they apply to last year's race they contain a lot of pertinent information that will only change modestly for the following years races. The dates for the next races are posted on the web calendar during the fall as soon as they are available.

Another resource is the Safety meetings that are held during the winter in the Chicago, Detroit, and Port Credit areas. These seminars are a great source of information and there is always the opportunity to ask questions of fellow sailors who have completed Solo Challenges. Also you don't need to be a member to attend the Annual General Meeting or AGM so be sure to invite your friends that may be interested in doing a Solo Challenge. The AGMs are held alternately in Detroit and Chicago during late January or early February. These meeting are a great opportunity to hook up with a mentor who can guide one through the preparation process and answer questions.

So when a friend asks about shorthanded sailing or what is involved in doing a Solo Challenge, be sure to give him or her a hand by answering their questions and pointing them to the available resources.

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## **Think you need a new boat or a “race boat” to enter a GLSS Challenge, Not true!**

**Some thoughts on why the GLSS is a good fit for a range of boats.**

**By Mark Mahowald**

There are a number of things that make long distance solo sailing with groups like the LMSS and GLSS so rewarding. The people are friendly, helpful and top quality sailors. It is a fun group to participate with. The feeling of accomplishment and the learning achieved by completing a challenge is very rewarding. One other point that is key in my mind is the range of boats that can sail in these events and be competitive is far broader than in a typical crewed race, even a crewed long distance race. The GLSS fleet typically consists of a real cross section of sailing, from boats over 30 years old, to hot racers, the occasional multihull, and fairly typical cruising boats. The sizes typically range from 27 feet to 50 feet, and the boats are as varied as their skippers (which can drift pretty far from the typical!).

In long distance solo sailing, frequently rating advantage or disadvantage, size and displacement advantages or disadvantages become somewhat muted by a few other factors:

- The courses are long, and the conditions frequently changes, holes form, leads can come and go, and “your conditions” may show up before the end. The number of times you think you have lost someone, only to track them down in the next hole is fairly amazing.
- Weather routing, tactics and “local knowledge” can be more important than raw boat speed in getting on the right side of the course, or around an island
- Good old fashion luck can play a role in a multi day event (I know it has helped me out on more than one occasion)
- Perseverance in a long distance solo event is also a factor. Who is changing sails and playing wind shifts at 3am on the second and third night? Who continues to press when the wind is light, the flies are biting and the sun is baking down? In crewed races, this is shared across a large group. In a solo race, every decision is up to you, and most of the time, everyone on the boat is in complete agreement. (There have been a couple of times where I thought I saw someone else on the boat towards the end of the challenges, but I bet they liked my decisions.)

If you are thinking about joining the long distance sailing scene on the Great Lakes, but are concerned your boat is a “cruiser” or too old, or the sails are not new, I recommend you look at the historical challenge results. You will find pure cruising boats like a Beneteau 46, Island packet 40 and Valiant 40 have done the events. You will see the typical class race boats as well, from the J105’s, T-10’s and Beneteau 36.6, and custom one designs. In the 2009 SoloMac, the “fastest” boat rated -42, and the “slowest” rated boat (one who has finished over 25 events, by the way), was a 27 footer that rated 216.

It is a rare fleet where so many designs and vintages of boats can be successful. As an example, in the 2013 Solo Mac challenge from Chicago to Macinaw, the overall corrected time winner was a 35 year old Beneteau 30, the smallest boat in the fleet, with the "slowest" rating as well (183), sailed by Bill Tucker. 2<sup>nd</sup> overall went to the current GLSS President, Ken Verhaeren sailing a Nonsuch 30. 3<sup>rd</sup> overall went to the largest boat in the fleet, a Beneteau 46 (I had to find a way to work my boat into this!), just 18 minutes separated 1<sup>st</sup> from 3<sup>rd</sup> on corrected time. Of course, this is far from the typical result, but it shows why every boat has a chance in this type of event. If you like to challenge yourself, and are excited about solo sailing, consider entering one of our events.

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## **Think you set a class elapsed time record in a GLSS Challenge, Make sure you get credit!**

We need your help making sure the challenge "fastest elapsed time" page is correct. If you are feeling pretty good about a challenge you did and the class record elapsed time you set, please help us to get the records correct. Look at the record by class link on the website (<http://www.solosailors.org/classrec.php>), and tell me if we have missed posting your class record! It is the best way to get this page up to date, and put your name in lights. Just email [glsswebmaster@gmail.com](mailto:glsswebmaster@gmail.com) and let me know what I need to fix! Please report any other errors on the website as well.

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## **Do you like History?**

The GLSS Board of Directors is looking for individuals interested in the history of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society. Do you like finding old pictures? How about learning the long held secrets of the skippers and their boats? If you are interested in that type of work, we would like to name a GLSS Historian. Contact any of the board members. If you do not want the job but have old photos or stories of years past, contact one of the board members.  
Ken Verhaeren [verhaerenk@att.net](mailto:verhaerenk@att.net)

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## **Have a good story for the newsletter?**

We are always looking for content for the newsletter and articles for the website. People who contribute materials get a free copy of the SC newsletter! How did your Challenge go this year, what would you like to share with the mailing list?  
Send any stories or ideas to me via email at: [glsswebmaster@gmail.com](mailto:glsswebmaster@gmail.com)



## CANADIAN SAILORS, LED BY GLSS MEMBER BRENT HUGHES, TO COMPETE IN THE PRESTIGIOUS ROYAL OCEAN RACING CLUB CARIBBEAN 600

A team of Canadian sailors from the Frenchman's Bay Yacht Club (FBYC) in Pickering, Ontario are set to be the sole Canadian entry in the prestigious RORC Caribbean 600 aboard the Spirit of Canada Ocean Challenges new Volvo 60 ***SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE*** (formerly *Amer Sports One*). Co-skippers Derek Hatfield and Chris Stanmore-Major will be joined by an entirely amateur group of sailors from FBYC.



Starting on Monday February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from English Harbor in Antigua, racers navigate around 11 Caribbean islands against a fleet of highly competitive yachts for 600 non-stop nautical miles. Now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year, the Caribbean 600 is becoming an iconic event on the RORC racing calendar. □ Though Frenchman's Bay Yacht Club is a small club of roughly 150 members geared mostly to cruisers and weekend racers, it has turned out a number of impressive sailors in its 51

year history, including 2 Olympic Sailors (1996 & 2004), 1 Olympic Swimmer (1992 & 1996), and numerous Canadian, North American, and even World Champion sailors! Not too bad for small yacht club that began its existence in only 1962. □ This year, a group of 12 Frenchman's Bay Yacht Club members, past members, and crew members, led by former Commodore Brent Hughes, decided to take a trip of a lifetime. It was during a long road trip in December that Brent, an avid sailor, decided to place a call to old friend Patianne Verburgh, to check up on the Spirit of Canada program, and see how things were going. During this conversation, the idea of the Caribbean 600 came up and on a whim Brent decided to join in on the fun, since it had been 6 years since he had done any ocean sailing; and there was none in his foreseeable future. Patianne accepted his deposit, and asked him if there was anybody else he thought may be interested. Within 48 hours, Brent had filled the boat with fellow members, ex-members, and crew that he knew well and had sailed with in the past. □ □ "It all just came together perfectly, this group of us. Most of us do not have any, or very little, ocean sailing experience. And none of us have any experience on a Volvo 60; that is for certain! However, we do have the ability to take a small piece of time out of our busy lives and join in on an adventure of a lifetime. The *Spirit of Adventure* offshore training program offers the everyday sailor the opportunity that most only dream of; that is to train on and sail an amazing offshore ocean racing boat with two of the finest offshore skippers in the

world today", Brent Hughes commented. □ □ Frenchman's Bay Yacht Club is proud of its long relationship with Derek Hatfield and the Spirit of Canada campaigns, and extremely proud to be sending 12 of its own to Antigua, to sail with Derek and Chris in this "Adventure of a Lifetime". □ □ To learn more about offshore sailing opportunities on **Spirit of Adventure**, please visit [www.spiritofcanada.net](http://www.spiritofcanada.net) □ □

## ABOUT THE RORC CARIBBEAN 600 □

The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the RORC Caribbean 600 is proving irresistible to yacht racing teams from all over the world. An international fleet of over 65 yachts are expected at the start line on Monday February 24<sup>th</sup> 2014. The northern hemisphere is currently experiencing some of the worst winter weather on record but well over 500 sailors are rubbing their hands together, relishing the prospect of racing around 11 Caribbean islands against highly competitive opposition. □ The Caribbean is, without doubt, one of yacht racing's most exhilarating playgrounds as warm trade winds and Caribbean swell provide superb sailing conditions. The RORC Caribbean 600 course, starting and finishing in Antigua, is designed to provide a challenging, high speed racetrack and its popularity has grown, year on year, since 2009.



### Contact details: □

Spirit of Canada  
Ocean Challenges □  
Patianne  
Verburgh □  
T:  
+1.902.529.2626 □

[patianne@spiritofcanada.net](mailto:patianne@spiritofcanada.net) □

[www.spiritofcanada.net](http://www.spiritofcanada.net) □ □

### 2014 Caribbean Regatta Dates □ □

Feb 24<sup>th</sup> The Caribbean 600  
Mar 4<sup>th</sup> Heineken Regatta  
Apr 12<sup>th</sup> Les Voile de St. Barth □  
Apr 25<sup>th</sup> Antigua Race Week □

Email us for a complete list of events: [sail@spiritofcanada.net](mailto:sail@spiritofcanada.net)

### Offshore Sailing Dates Volvo 60

May 4<sup>th</sup> Antigua to Lunenburg □  
May 28<sup>th</sup> Lunenburg to Bermuda □  
June 5<sup>th</sup> Bermuda to Lunenburg □  
July 3<sup>rd</sup> Lunenburg to Azores □  
July 19<sup>th</sup> Azores to Lunenburg □  
Nov 8<sup>th</sup> Lunenburg to Canaries □

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## **Cole Butterworth is a GLSS member who came up from Australia to do a Solo Mac in a chartered J35 in 2012. He recently made a trip from Wellington NZ to Cape Horn. Here is the story!**

To the motor racer, the pinnacle of the sport is Monte Carlo, to the mountain climber it is Mt Everest. To the offshore sailor it is Cape Horn. From the time I began to sail, I was captivated by tales of ships and their crews being put to the test of rounding this treacherous region of the Southern Ocean. So when I first read Tony Mowbray's sailing schedule for 2013-14 and read about the trip from Wellington NZ to Cape Horn, it initially seemed like a very long and lonely trip. However the more I thought about it the more it began to appeal as an adventure of a lifetime.

Tony Mowbray is a sailor from my hometown of Newcastle who in the year 2000 sailed solo and non-stop around the world in a record 181 days. This was followed in 2004 by an expedition to Commonwealth Bay in Antarctica. Subsequently Tony purchased the 60ft yacht "Commitment" for the purpose of conducting charter trips to Antarctica.

This voyage was on board "Commitment", an Ocean 60 Schooner rigged yacht. The boat was being delivered back down to Ushuaia in Argentina for another season of charter work. The charters are to both the Antarctic Peninsula and the Chilean Fiords. On board was the skipper Tony Mowbray, 1<sup>st</sup> mate Jordan and 3 crew. All three of us had different reasons for embarking on this trip. I was there because, as a sailor, I have always dreamt of sailing around Cape Horn. Neil was there in the hope of freeing himself from his desire to go cruising, and Adam was there to discover more about himself.

Wellington to Cape Horn is 4800nm across the Southern Ocean. We planned to round the Horn then head up the Beagle Channel to Ushuaia in Argentina. Inside the Beagle Channel is protected smooth waters. Prior to that however is exposed Southern Ocean with all the wind, waves and unpredictability that the Southern Ocean may bring.

The sailing plan was to depart Wellington at 41°S 174°E on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and sail in a south easterly direction south of the Chatham Islands, to around 50°S, then follow 50° over to around 80°W, near the Chilean coast. Then alter course southward toward the horn at 57°S.

Dinner on the eve of our departure was a great chance to really get to know everyone on board. The conversation flowed freely, as did the wonderful NZ wine. Although as the next day was departure day we were careful to limit the wine intake. There was a long trip ahead.

On departure day, "Windy Wellington" was as usual, windy. A northerly was blowing at 20 to 25 knots. After clearing customs we set off into Wellington Harbour. The wind was already starting to strengthen. We hoisted the sails and immediately decided to reef the main and only partly unfurl the headsail. I hope this wasn't an omen for the rest of the trip.

The northerly pushed us out of the harbour and into Cook Strait. If I thought it was blowing in the harbour, Cook Strait was going to really impress. Once out into the strait, the wind whipped up to 45 knots. I have never sailed a schooner rigged yacht before but

all the extra spars and rigging really whistles when in a blow. Luckily it was a following wind so we had a quick passage through the strait and out into the South Pacific. Next stop Cape Horn.

The first two weeks of the voyage was dominated predominantly with winds over the port quarter, from the north-west, and with clear blue skies. This long period of excellent sailing weather came about because a strong high pressure system to our north, in the Pacific, was preventing the unsettled low pressure systems to our south from moving north. Our track along 48° to 50°S was positioned nicely between the two systems. So while the high stayed to our north, the weather would be a relatively warm following wind and slight seas. This changed dramatically later in the voyage when the low pressure systems began moving north bringing the strong and cold south-westerlies with them.

We quickly settled into our ship-board routine and into our roster groups. The two old boys, Neil and I, the two young guys, Jordan and Adam, and Tony. Luckily Tony enjoyed his own company as he was rostered on his own. The team on watch could be easily determined by music emanating from the cockpit speakers. Rodrigues and Jimmy Buffet could be heard wafting gently out into the south pacific when Neil and I had the watch. The sound of loud head-banging music was an indicator that the young guys were on duty. I guess there was a generation gap happening there.

The crew may have been divided into three watches, but there was really two main groups. The boys bunking on the port side of the boat, the Port Side Boys (yes I know it sounds like a boy band), and the Starboard Side boys. Adam and I were in the cabins on the starboard side and that meant that when on port tack, we were on the low side. This enabled us to sleep while wedged comfortably in between the bunk and the hull. This stopped us from rolling about when the boat rocked from side to side. The port side boys on the other hand were on the high side. They were constantly at risk of being thrown from their bunks when the boat lurched over the waves. This meant they had to rig the bunk's lee cloth to stop them from falling out. Lee cloths are not very comfortable and so sleep for the high side boys was challenging. Only about five days of the voyage was spent on starboard tack, so Adam and I were very pleased with our choice of cabins. Eventually the high pressure system that was providing all our fine weather began to move back into the Pacific. This allowed the low pressure systems to move into our area and bring with them the colder damp south westerlies. This also brought dense fogs and a south westerly swell that when combined with the existing north westerly swell created some very confused seas. The winds were also stronger reaching 35 to 40 knots. The Southern Ocean has a constant south west swell that settles down in periods of fine weather, but will rapidly whip up when the wind returns. Even though we were sailing with the wind on the port or starboard quarter, Commitment would often surf down the large building seas.

The large building waves and confused seas eventually began to overpower the auto-pilot which demanded that we steer the boat by hand. Due to the overcast conditions and very little moon, the nights were very dark. This made spotting the huge confused waves before they crashed into the boat very difficult. Often they would hit the boat from all different angles. On dark nights, the southern ocean can be a very featureless sea-scape making steering a steady course very challenging. For this reason we had to steer to a compass course. Steering a compass course on a rough and dark night is a difficult job

even in good conditions. These conditions made it all that more dangerous. The possibility of an involuntary gybe was ever present which meant we had to give the boat full attention during our time at the wheel. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, day 30, the wind and waves increased to a dangerous level forcing us to “heave to”. The south westerly sea was rising and the boat was often surfing down the waves. Occasionally a large breaking north westerly wave would thunder down behind the boat and if the helmsman did not react quickly enough would force the boat to head off down the wave in the wrong direction, (very bad) or round up into the wave (very wet). Just before dark the skipper decided that the wind and waves were too dangerous for a night sail so we hove-to. The heave-to manoeuvre is when the sails are reefed to the smallest area possible, the headsail back winded and the helm lashed to leeward. This forces the boat to sit comfortably with very little speed with the bow pointing to the waves. Instantly the noise of wind and rushing seas was replaced with an eerie silence. The boat rode out the storm very comfortably. We remained hove to for 24 hours until just before dark on the next night. When we resumed our course for the horn. Remarkably though, while hove to we were still making 2 knots in boat speed and our course was our required course to the horn. So it did not feel like all wasted time.

Land was sighted in the evening of day 33, December 5<sup>th</sup>. The ocean floor shallows significantly when approaching South America as the deep ocean floor rises up to meet the continent. From 2000 meters in the Southern Ocean to 200 to 300 meters at the horn. This causes the southern ocean swell to build up and become very menacing like breakers on the shore. Our course down the coast of Chile was all shallow water so was very lumpy and confused with the occasional “big one” that would stand up and crash down on us. Certainly wouldn’t like to be there in a real blow.

We rounded Cape Horn around 3.30pm on December 6<sup>th</sup>, day 34. The wind continued to increase all day so by the time we rounded the Horn it was gusting to 45 or 50 knots. Anything less would have been a disappointment. Along with the wind came rain, sleet and snow. In the space of two deep breaths the conditions could go from sunny to dark overcast conditions. It seems the weather gods were throwing it all at us.

Cape Horn sparks different feelings and emotions in each of us. How would we feel once at the horn? I didn’t have any idea how I would feel. It was all new territory for me. As I was to discover, it was a very reflective time for me. It was very satisfying given the tough voyage just undertaken, and now almost over. More importantly though, were thoughts of the number of sailors who attempted to reach the Horn but failed. Many of those lost to the merciless raging seas. It really was a time to pay homage to those sailors in this very sacred piece of ocean.

Once past the Horn, the only thing remaining was to make a sharp left turn and head north into the Beagle Channel and head toward Ushuaia in Argentina around 30 miles away. The Beagle Channel can be a very windy environment but on this day the weather was very acceptable. The temperature was still very cold with the water at 3.9°C and a fresh coating of snow on the shore. The wind chill was down at 2° below zero. On our port side was Chile and on our starboard was Argentina. Rather than travelling up the Channel in the dark, a quick stop for the night was made off the Chilean village of Puerto Toro. This was the first time the boat had been still and silent in 34 days. The silence was deafening. Little creaking and tapping noises that were quite acceptable at sea would now drive one to distraction and prevent sleep. First light found us back on the Channel

heading north toward the Chilean Village of Puerto Williams. There we would clear Chilean customs and stay a couple of days to regain our land legs before making for our final destination of Ushuaia in Argentina.

The voyage was over. Did we achieve our goals? Remember I was along because I wanted to sail to and around Cape Horn. A resounding success and very proud to have achieved the milestone. Neil was there to free himself of his desire to go cruising. He returned home and immediately began searching for a new boat. Not exactly what he expected from the trip I imagine. And Adam, I am not sure if he found himself out there but am sure he was pleased with what he did find out about himself.

Apparently there is always one crazy disruptive person on board a sailing yacht on a long passage. The theory is that if after ten days the skipper cannot identify who that person is, then it must be him. Well done Tony, you managed to subdue your crazy disruptive side for most of the 34 days.

