

Recap of the 2011 GLSS Lake Erie Solo Challenge

Paul Nickerson writes:

It was a hell of a sail and we're not back home yet...

The Lake Erie Solo Challenge saw 18 boats make the starting Line on a beautiful day with south winds.

The fleet made good speed clearing the Lake Erie Islands by dark. Then the fun began as a series of cold fronts produced a series of isolated squalls that watched over the fleet. There was plenty of electricity to light the skies and some wind and rain to keep the boats moving and the skippers active with spinnakers going up and down, reefs in and out, and headsail changes. There was a lot of beautiful fast sailing with the constant threat of these small squalls continuously down Lake Erie. There were even a couple of water spouts thrown in and one had its eye on Noel Brockman who waited with sails lashed down. Fortunately it veered away at the last minute and Noel continued on chasing his son Luke down the course. Oh, I almost forgot to mention it was also cold, not quite like the Macs, but very cold summer days. Twenty plus knot winds and double or triple reefed mainsails powered the fleet around the Buffalo, Seneca Shoal buoy downwind in Lake Erie's finest 6 foot waves only to turn and sail back into them for the 60 miles back to Erie. The skippers all felt blessed that this leg was just a very close reach back as the boats could sail fast through the waves with occasional but not continuous pounding.

Some very experienced GLSS sailors said this was the most demanding Challenge they had ever sailed. This, because through all the changing and challenging conditions you could still sail it as a competitive race and fight back to challenge Lake Erie. All the finishers were in by Monday night and the time at Erie YC was enjoyed by all.