



GLSS Solo Challenger

*The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society
December 2019 – Ken Verhaeren(verhaerk@aol.com) editor*

Officers:

Directors:

President	Joey Baker
Vice President	Rob Burger
Treasurer	Jeff Stack
Recording Secretary	Noel Brockman
Director Mac Chair.	Elisabeth Reichling

Director	Mark Gannon
Director	Brent Hughes
Director	Jeff Neuhalfen
Director	Rick Stage

From The Helm



Am I crazy?

Prior to our recent marriage, my wife Beth, also a sailor, asked me this with a serious expression on her face. “I don’t think so, why do you ask that?” I say. She responds by explaining that every conversation she has within the sailing community where she introduces herself as being with me ends up the same way: the other person regales her with some story about my sailing and they finish by saying ‘Joey is crazy’. She claims this happens 9 times out of 10.

I really don’t think I’m crazy, but I understand it is all a matter of perspective. After Beth and I watched the movie *Free Solo* (which you should see if you haven’t) about climber Alex Honnold’s ascent of El Capitan without ropes, we both concluded that he was crazy. However, throughout the movie Alex expounds on the virtues of soloing and his love of doing it.

So I’ve pondered this question more and decided that the more valuable question is ‘why do I love solo sailing?’ For me it is the challenge of knowing that I have to have the mental and physical skills to handle whatever situations come up. I also enjoy the solitude, as the name of my boat (*Peace*) suggests.

Well, that’s a lot of introspection for me, so let’s move on the things I’m more comfortable talking about - this year’s challenges.

I’m happy to say that all five of our challenges were completed safely, even with some nasty weather on Lake Erie, and we had great participation in all events. Several skippers also completed their first time single-handed challenge. I’d like to welcome those skippers as new members of Great Lakes Singlehanded Society.

Peace,
Joey Baker
GLSS President

Annual General Membership Meeting

It is that time of the year! Reflection on the past sailing season and all of the accomplishments of our members. Introduction of new members who joined us in 2019. Retelling of dubious stories from years past years. And seeing our friends from all over the Great Lakes.

Saturday January 25, 2020. 4 PM - 10 PM

*Key Tower
127 Public Square
Cleveland, OH.*



Agenda:

4:00 – 5:00 ~ Check-in, open bar will be ready for you...

5:00 – 6:00 ~ Annual General Membership Business Meeting

6:00 – 7:00 ~ Single Handed Social Hour

7:00 – 9:00 ~ Dinner, and a talk by Rich Wilson

9:00 – :?? ~ You can never be social enough...time to tell those really tall sailing stories...

Please visit the AGM event page at, <https://www.solosailors.org/agm/> for more details and to RSVP.

RICH WILSON

Sailor and
Educator



With a degree in mathematics from Harvard and in sciences from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in Boston, his home town, Rich Wilson is a brilliant man, who has had numerous occupations: a maths teacher in Boston, defence analyst in Washington and consultant for a desalination plant in Saudi Arabia among others. In short, a brain. Rich Wilson is also a successful sailor, who became known back in 1980 when he won the Newport- Bermuda Race. In 1990, he decided to use sailing as an educational tool teaching children. When he attempted to smash the San Francisco-Boston record sailing double-handed aboard Great American, a 60-foot trimaran, he capsized off Cape Horn before being rescued by a cargo vessel. This episode which clearly left its mark was followed by many schoolchildren. Rich Wilson gave it another go on the same course three years later. The second attempt was successful as he was followed by 300,000 children in the United States, but also by millions of adults as his articles were taken up in many leading newspapers. Aboard Great American II, he set two new records between New York and Melbourne, and Hong Kong-New York, and finished second in the Transatlantic Race in 2004.

At the age of 58, he was the oldest competitor in the 2008-2009 Vendée Globe. Aboard an older boat, launched ten years before the race, he fought hard to overcome the gales and some serious damage. He reached les Sables d'Olonne after 121 days of sailing.



PROGRESSIVE
CHICAGO Boat,
RV & Sail Show®

Dates & Location

January 8-12, 2020

McCormick Place - South

2301 S Lake Shore Drive Chicago IL 60616

WED 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM
THU 11:00 AM - 9:00 PM
FRI 11:00 AM - 9:00 PM
SAT 10:00 AM - 8:00 PM
SUN 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM



Help out at the GLSS Booth! See the schedule below to pick your time (2 hour if possible) and contact Ken (verhaerk@gmail.com) with day and times.

Table 1

Volunteer	Hours	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1000 to 1100	Show not open	Show not open	Show not open		
	1100 to 1200	Show not open				
	1200 to 1300	Show not open				
	1300 to 1400	Show not open				
	1400 to 1500					
	1500 to 1600					
	1600 to 1700					
	1700 to 1800					Show not open
	1800 to 1900					Show not open
	1900 to 2000					Show not open
	2000 to 2100	Show not open			Show not open	Show not open
	2100 Show closes	Show not open	Show not open	Show not open	Show not open	Show not open

Lake Erie Challenge

This is Ron's story of his Lake Erie Challenge from last year. He completed the Trans Super Challenge and then headed back to Lake Erie for the start. Ron has completed Challenges on each of the 5 Great Lakes.

Lake Erie Challenge Story **Ron Smallbone**

This is the story of my fourth Lake Erie Challenge. This 271 nautical mile solo course takes the competitors to the start line just outside the North Cape Yacht Club, in La Salle, Michigan, east through the Pelee passage, to the other end of the Lake rounding Seneca Shoal buoy near Buffalo, New York. It then finishes about 60 nautical miles west at the entrance mark to the channel leading to Erie, Pennsylvania.

I didn't have a lot of time to linger after the 2019 trans Superior solo challenge after I finished on August 8th. I've been pretty much on the go ever since. I crossed Lake Superior from the extreme west end at Duluth, Minnesota, all the way to the east end at Sault Ste Marie, Michigan, then south on the St Marys River to Lake Huron, south on Lake Huron through the St Clair River to arriving here in Belle River, Ontario on the south shore of Lake St. Clair.

Thursday August 15th, 2019

I'm here at a slip at the Belle River Municipal Marina in Belle River, Ontario. A nasty cold front blew through here yesterday afternoon with strong northerly winds. It's a grey overcast morning with scattered rain showers. The wind is now blowing out of the north east.

9:30am. I cast off from Belle River and set a course of 291 degrees true towards the Detroit River about 9 nautical miles away. It's a hot and humid day with a one meter swell left over from yesterday's winds. There's scattered showers in the area. My speed is about five knots, and the winds are light out of the north east at about ten knots. I took the north east inlet towards the Detroit River, skirting to the south east of Peach Island.

11:40am I'm now south bound on the Detroit River just as the up bound freighter the H Lee White approaches from the south towards me. I wisely moved off the channel to give her a wide berth.

12:25pm. I passed under the Ambassador International bridge.

A short time later it started to rain but only for a short interval. I followed the channel south, past Lasalle, Ontario where I observed the CSL freighter the Hon Paul L Martin up bound. Again I moved off of the up bound channel.

I decided to take the middle channel leading out to Lake Erie for no other reason other than it's protected and it's the only channel that I have not been through.

2:40pm. I cleared the middle channel and continued to follow the green buoys on my right into the lake.

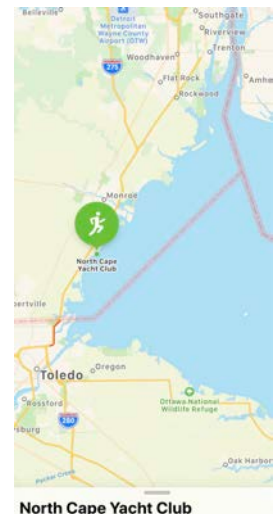
3:25pm. I'm abeam of the Detroit light beacon and fog horn. It's a 49 foot white tower with a black top. Racon, Radar transponder beacon and fog signal every 30 seconds with a two flashing white light every 6 seconds.

It looks and sounds scary. I took a few pictures. I'm sure the Wicked Witch of the west lived there at one time! I only saw a saw a flock of black cormorants as sentries, guarding the evil tower.

3:45pm. I set my next waypoint to the North Cape Yacht Club (NCYC), steering a course of 235 degrees true, located approximately 14 nautical miles away. My present speed is

averaging around 5.5 knots and the depths are fairly shallow at 24 feet most of the way to NCYC.

5:20pm. I entered the North Cape Yacht Club channel, riding the rolling swells that followed me in. I spotted Paul Nickerson (Nick-nack) and Jim Lee (a prospective GLSS member) who directed me to a spot where I stayed last time, near the dingy crane. The water levels are so high here, you have to position your fenders touching the water.



I used my CBP Roam app to check in with customs. Jim Lee helped me out, by allowing me to use his I phone as a hot spot. I eventually connected to the North Capes wifi. US CBP later e mailed me my clearance and travel ID numbers.

At the club house I met two more prospective GLSS members, 'Duke', (Charles Mueller, Zelda) from Buffalo, New York and Rod (Rod Yupik, Windigo II) from Port Dover, Ontario. Dan Pavlat (Coconut Telegraph) was there as well and eager to hear about my trans Superior ordeal.

It started to rain really hard with thunder and lightning while we were in the club house. I left my companion way open. Dan was kind enough to run out put his wash boards in and kindly did the same for me. I bought a cheese burger for dinner and retired back to the boat for an early evening.

Friday August 16th, 2019. It's a hazy warm overcast day.

11:00am. The 2019 Lake Erie challenge race chair, Paul Nickerson, who has a car here graciously offered to do a run to the West Marine outlet in nearby Toledo, Ohio. At West Marine I bought a winch handle, sailing gloves and a pair of sun glasses, totalling \$158 US dollars. After that he took us to the Kroger grocery outlet for last minute provisions, another \$38 dollars.

That afternoon most of the competitors starting to arrive. Blair Arden, on Otis B Driftwood rafted off of me. There were lots of familiar faces from the previous single handed races.

4:00pm. We received our registration package containing the sailing instructions, radio logs, mark rounding report, and map of the finish mark including the city of Erie, Pennsylvania and the location of the Erie Yacht club. It also included the competitors contact list, and Divisional splits. We we were also given two acrylic mugs for the Lake Erie solo challenge with our boats name boldly marked on each mug. Wally McMinn (Odessey) went over some house keeping matters and welcomed us to the North Cape Yacht club. The North Cape Yacht Club Commodore, Chip Gosman also welcomed all the single handed competitors to North Cape and wished us a fast, fair winds and safe race.

7:00pm. Dinner was served, a half rack of succulent 'fall off the bone' pork ribs, baked potato, with sour cream and butter, green beans and coleslaw. Desert was the famous make your own sundaes.

Paul Nickerson then went over the sailing instructions including the starting sequence, radio log position procedures. We are to communicate on channel 72 and report our position every six hours starting at 2:00pm. The first warning will be at 9:55am followed by the start at 10:00am. Each competitor introduced themselves with a brief history of how many challenges they have completed, home Port and name and make of their vessel and any other trivia they wanted to add. I was the only Lake Ontario competitor.

At the end Wally McMinn showed a video regarding the very challenging 2016 Lake Erie solo race. This was the race where I lost my rudder. It showed me talking about this ordeal. Did I ever look tired! It was one of the worst solo challenges I've ever experienced under the most extreme and challenging weather conditions.

Saturday August 17th, 2019 (Race day).

I started with a hot shower. The weather is hot and humid.

7:15 am. The competitors were self served hot coffee, fruit, bagels, cream cheese and donuts courtesy of the NCYC staff. One of the staff wanted us to take a banana with us. I declined due to my superstition of having bananas on board brings bad luck!

9:20am. I cast off and the single handed fleet headed out to the race Committee boat.

10:00am. The port start went off with out incident. Winds were light out of the south west and I had a nice clean start. My course was 85 degrees true towards the Middle Sister Islands then to a mark between Pelee point and Pelee Island.

10:30am. I set the spinnaker. I had to do one gybe. Blair Arden on Otis B Driftwood, had already set his spinnaker and went way off towards the north east. He had a good start and got a fair distance ahead of me. I stayed close to the rhumb line and was near Walkure 2, Mark Smith who was positioned just off my starboard side but slightly ahead.

12:00 noon I'm 26.44 nautical miles away from my first waypoint, which will take me safely past the Middle Sister Island towards Pelee Point. My speed is four to five knots. There's a squall warning issued for eastern Lake Erie and I can see some dark clouds forming towards the south west. I'll have to keep an eye on the weather and be ready to douse the spinnaker.

12:15pm. The squall warning (thankfully) was cancelled for eastern Lake Erie by Sarnia Coast Guard Radio.

2:45pm. Lunch today was a pulled chicken meat sandwich and fresh lettuce. Radio check in, the entire fleet was accounted for.

The west bound freighter the John G Munson abeam of me to the North.

2:50pm. Charge my batteries, 2000 rpms for one hour. I topped up the water in the lead acid batteries. I am now past Middle Sister Island, 12.15 nautical miles from my waypoint, approaching north of North Harbour Island reef. I'm only doing 3 knots, on a course of 85 degrees true and it's brutally hot and humid.

5:45pm. I doused the spinnaker, and hoisted my light racing number one head sail. I'm now steering a course of 102 degrees true. My speed is only 2.7 knots in very light wind conditions as I'm entering the Pelee passage.

6:10pm. I heard Mark Smith, Walkure 2 trying to contact the freighter Algoma Discovery. He did make contact with the Algoma Discovery radio operator who said he would pass him on his port side. Mark said he was dead in the water (not moving).

6:25Pm. The Algoma Discovery just passed me westbound within five hundred feet of my port side. She's doing 13 knots.

6:55pm. I set a new waypoint to Seneca Shoal light 171 nautical miles away, steering a true course of 70 degrees. The winds are light from the south. My speed is only 4.4 knots. I'm now clear of Point Pelee.

9:00pm. Radio check in, all competitors accounted for. I reset the spinnaker. My course is 70 degrees true, and I'm now 163.5 nautical miles from the Seneca Shoal buoy near Buffalo, New York. I charged the batteries, at 2000 rpms. Charging completed.

9:40pm. Received a VHF radio call from Lawrence Visnic, 'Living a Dream', all the way from Cleveland, Ohio. He was asking if Jim (Lee) was in the area. I told him I thought so based on the strength of his signal. I also advised Lawrence I was 159 nautical miles to the Seneca Buoy and look forward to seeing him at the Erie Yacht Club. I relayed this information to his friend Jim Lee (Woolamaloo) on channel 72.

The wind has completely died and the spinnaker is barely flying. I'm down to only two knots.

10:00pm The full, blood red moon just rose over the night sky horizon towards the east. I'm back up to three plus knots. It's very light but relaxing and kind of magical out here tonight. The lake is unusually calm and it's very warm. One of my competitors in my division, Mark Smith (Walkure 2) is less than a mile away off my forward starboard quarter. I can check on his speed and compare it against mine from his AIS transmit signal. I'm down below and may try and go for a short nap. I'll try to sleep with my harness on, I prefer this, especially when the spinnaker is flying.

11:45Pm. I can't believe it! Lawrence Visnic, Living a Dream is right beside me. He thought I was Jim Lee and asked if Jim was the boat flying the spinnaker which of course it wasn't, it was me instead. He sailed out from his home port of Whiskey Island, in Cleveland, Ohio. He was communicating with his good friend Jim Lee (Woolamaloo). That Lawrence is one crazy guy! I think Jim is just behind me. Lawrence turned west to search for his buddy.

Sunday August 18th, 2019

12:15am. What a night! I'm not sure how long I can carry this spinnaker. It's very closed hauled right now, but so far the auto pilot is doing an excellent job of steering the boat. It helps that the lake conditions are so calm. I'm now 147 nautical miles from the Seneca Shoal buoy near Buffalo. I just can't catch Mark Smith, Walkure 2, sailing a C&C 30 and he's starting to pull ahead of me. It's a warm shorts and shirt sleeve night with the full moon shining like a spot light high in the night sky now.

2:00am. Radio position check in, everyone accounted for except Tin Lizzie, who could not be heard or raised.

2:25am. Charge batteries, There's lots of thunder and bolt lightning observed. It's starting to become more prevalent in frequency and intensity.

3:00am. It started raining, winds are erratic, and the spinnaker is just all limp and flogging. The speed is around three knots and the auto helm is holding the course of about 70 degrees true.

3:20am. The storm hit with a vengeance. I was tethered to the leeward jack line and thought the boat was going to broach, trying to hang on for dear life! I couldn't even get to the halyards to release them. There was a little bit of a lull and I managed to release the spinnaker halyard at the mast. It was pretty much all over in five minutes. I just raised the spinnaker and kept on going.

There was a boat beside me doing circles with a large asymmetrical spinnaker. I found out later it was Wally McMinn on Odyssey. Incredibly I don't think I sustained any damage and Wally reported he didn't think he sustained any damage as well. We both got lucky this time.

I'm 130 nautical miles from the Seneca Shoal light.

4:10am. I decided to douse the spinnaker. It looked like there was another storm cell coming through so I thought this time I'll be prepared ahead of time. Only this time it was a false alarm. I set the sails wing on wing.

7:30am. I made hot oatmeal with raisins. I may set the spinnaker again after the 8am radio position call in. It's a grey overcast day but the wind is directly out of the south west.

8:00am. Radio position call in. I got position reports from most of the fleet. The faster boats I could not hear, namely: Shock and all, Tin Lizzie, and Coconut Telegraph.

8:20am. I decided to delay the spinnaker set. I'm doing pretty good speed just broad reaching with my main and head sail. I'll take this opportunity to charge the batteries. I'm now 112.4 nautical miles from the Seneca Shoal buoy.

9:10am. I had to douse the head sail, I'm surfing off waves doing over 7 knots on the main sail alone. It's one hell of a ride! I'm glad I didn't put up the spinnaker. I'm rounding up on the main at times, we'll just see how it goes. My next option is to reef the main sail but I want to maintain a respectable speed. Welcome to Lake Erie, by far, in my opinion, the nastiest of the solo Great Lakes GLSS challenges! I need to get some sleep as well. This is the leading edge of a cold front that's blowing through. The sun is starting to shine through and the waves are building.

9:30am. I just double reefed the main sail. The boat is comfortable but I'm thinking of setting my number three head sail just to give it that extra speed. I'll have to stuff

the number one racing sail down below via the forward hatch. It's an exhausting task and I'm resting between these maneuvers.(.... to write up this journal!) I think I will sleep on this for a moment!

Well I didn't sleep on it too long. I decided to 'hank on' my cruising number two. I also placed both wash boards into my companion way. The following seas have that potential to break right on your transom and possibly flood the cabin as well. I may shake out that reef on the main sail.

11:45am. I just shook out the double reef on the main sail. I probably should have done it earlier but needed some sleep. Some of these waves are pretty big and are starting to break as white caps. Right now they are in the right direction. It'll be no fun trying to beat into these waves towards the finish line at Erie. I'm hoping by then they would have diminished in size.

I'm about 94 nautical miles from the Seneca Shoal buoy. It's a sunny warm pleasant day.

At around 2:30pm. I went to launch the spinnaker and things went terribly wrong. I made the mistake of leaving the genoa halyard forward where it could, and it did, tangle with the spinnaker halyard. The spinnaker wrapped into this tight hour glass and even fouled up with a third halyard that I have as a back up. I struggled to untangle the mess and finally admitted defeat. I had only one halyard left and that was for the main sail. I have no means to ascend the mast single handed which is a shame because this costed me the race. I struggled with the out of control spinnaker and was totally exhausted. It's still wrapped tight and I've squeezed the lower end of the spinnaker into the forward hatch. I used the hatch to fasten the lower end while the top is a tangled mess.

5:00pm. I radioed one of my closest competitors Jack Jamison (Nebesa) and Mark Smith (Walkure 2) advising him that I'm officially withdrawing from the race and heading to the Welland canal. Wally McMinn (Odyssey) over heard the conversation and wished me a safe trip home.

I set a new waypoint for Long Point, then I'll set the next waypoint for Port Colborne. This sailing season sure has had its challenges. It's been an expensive season for me.

There's been numerous squall warnings for the eastern end of Lake Erie.

11:30pm. I'm just past Long point and I can see lightning all around this area. I'm motor sailing into the teeth of a monster squall. I decided to cut the spinnaker free to fly. This turned out to be a wise decision when the squall hit me later with a vengeance.

Monday August 19th, 2019

1240am. The squall hit me, extreme winds, rain and lightning. One of the weather warnings confirmed by racon radar of wind gusts in excess of 45 knots.

12:45am. This was the worst storm I've been through in recent memory, I noted my position: 42 41 665 N, 79 39 365 W.

I had already double reefed the main sail and have no head sail. The shredded remnants of the spinnaker was just flying free.

I seriously thought I was going to get struck with lightning or caught up in a funnel cloud. This was absolutely terrifying. I thought of my children and my fellow single handed competitors caught out there as well.

The engine over heat alarm went off and I had to shut it down immediately.

1:07am. The worst of the storm has passed.

1:10am. The new auto pilot continued to steer a course throughout the storm but a few times the 'off course' alarm went off, temporarily during the height of the squall. It would always track itself back on course.

1:12am. I'm 17.68 nautical miles from the freighter inlet at Port Colborne.

I topped up the engine oil and started the Yanmar to resume motor sailing. I kept the rpms to a minimum at only 2500 which is well below normal.

6:15am. I pulled into the first empty slip (number 4). The one full of geese and goose poop. I called into Canada Customs, and was issued a reporting number: 2019 2319-021.

They moved me to another sailor friendly dock. My power boat neighbour (on a 1988, 32 Foot Bayliner, 'Slip away') was a great guy: Rob Finnegan and his wife Daysi , presently working aboard a freighter bulk carrier (the Michipicoten, Lower Lakes towing) as a cook. He was extremely accommodating and even cooked me

a breakfast! Later his wife Daysi made me an authentic Dominican Republic dinner; of beans, rice, plantain, salad and strong, but very much needed black coffee. You make great friends while boating!

Rob Finnegan and another couple Ken and Barb on a Roberts 36 (Omnipotence) originally out of Thunder Bay, Ontario but now living locally here in Port Colborne, hoisted me to the top of my mast to untangle the mess. This spinnaker was not salvageable.

Ken, later on, gave me all kinds of cruising tips regarding anchorages on the north shore of Lake Superior, when starting out from Thunder Bay, Ontario. I marked them onto my chart plotter.

Tuesday August 20th, 2019

6:30am. I had a coffee with Rob on his boat 'Slip away'.

7:00am. I contacted Seaway Control (905 641 1932 extension 5454) regarding the down bound passage. I was instructed to be at the Port Colborne town docks no later than 9:00am.

My crew Walter arrived here at Port Colborne thanks to the generosity of Peter Baker who drove him to the Sugarloaf Marina.

At about 8:00am, another down bound sail boat arrived at the town docks on the canal here in Port Colborne.

The skipper Brian (Buliwyf) F. Odinson, owner of an older 27' Hunter sailboat called 'Gypsy Two' and his crew 'Frenchy' were going to transit the Welland canal together. Brian was planning an ambitious sail later with his girlfriend. The plan was to sail his boat across the North Atlantic Ocean to Greenland, Iceland and eventually Sweden where his ancestral routes originate from. He had plans to sail back to South America via Africa, doing all this with out the aid of an auto pilot! He had on board a Viking shield and spear, part of some sort of show he had taken part in. You meet some very unusual people while boating!

11:00am. We entered lock 8, filled out the paperwork, proof of payment, and returned the completed paperwork into a fish net extended to us by the canal staff.

We were also transiting the canal with a large fifty foot plus Neptunas power cruiser from the Gross Pointe Yacht Club near Detroit, Michigan. They were heading home to their winter residence in Naples, Florida.

This was the fastest canal transit for me, too date, with no delays.

6:05pm. We exited the canal at Port Weller and set a new course towards the Port Credit Yacht Club.

11:00pm. Just after this time we entered PCYC harbour entrance. A thorough shower and later a great sleep on board. It was good to be home!

Monday August 26th, 2019

This morning Tom Eagles and Karen McRae hoisted me to the top of my mast. I was shocked to see two wire strands missing from the fore stay. This must be replaced before I can resume sailing. My season is done. I'll take the mast down and replace this fore stay and all of the running rigging needs to be replaced. I was very fortunate I didn't lose the rig when these failures occurred. THE END.

Upcoming Events

- 06/20/2020 – Mackinac Solo Challenges
- 07/11/2020 – Lake Ontario Solo Challenge
- 08/15/2020 – Lake Erie Solo Challenge
- 08/2020 * – Lake Michigan Solo Scramble
- 09/5/2020 * – Lower Lake Huron Solo Challenge
- 09/26/2020 * – St Clair Solo Challenge

* Tentative event date may change

REMEMBER - Each one of the Challenges will be tracked for your enjoyment. You will find the tracking information on the GLSS site.

You can reference the event calendar at, <https://www.solosailors.org/calendar/> for the most up-to-date event dates and details.