



The
**SOLO
CHALLENGER**



The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society

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Newsletter Editors: Tony Driza & Jo Buckingham

Summer 2007

**A NOTE FROM THE
PRESIDENT**

by Rob Robins

The Mac Challenges have been met once again! Joining the ranks of lifetime members in the GLSS are **four new members** from the Port Huron – Mac:

Luke Brockman
Nate Brockman
Jeff Golding (President's Cup Winner)
John Ollila

Additionally, there are **seven new members** from the Chicago – Mac:

Sheldon Dummer
Mark Gannon
Dirk Kruger
Mike Rodgers
Arch Van Meter
Dave West (President's Cup Winner)
Bob Wooden

The Society also welcomed back some members we haven't seen in a while. One of them, Steve Pettengill, trailered *Hunter's Child II* up from Florida, and went on to win the **Peter Fisher Memorial Trophy**. While the weather did make it more of a challenge than expected (mostly with patience), spirits and friendships were renewed once all were on the Island. It is safe to say that the GLSS has once again put on an exciting, safe and

rewarding event. Many thanks to all who helped make it happen!

Now on to more challenges - the Trans Superior took place on Aug. 4th with a record twenty three entries (which was **double** the number of crewed entries in the event). Twenty two were on the line for the start, and another **nine new members** joined our ranks with their successful finishes:

Ian Bentley
Tom Bickner
Gail Bowdish
Pat Courneya
Sandy Sellers
Pete Shelquist (President's Cup Winner)
Mike Spence
Tom Treichel
Rick Umpierre

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Congratulations to all the successful finishers, and to the new members, "Welcome to the GLSS!"

These new members from the Trans Superior Singlehanded Challenge, along with the rest of the successful Trans finishers will receive their bronze medallions at the 2008 AGM, to be held in Detroit, Michigan next January.

Up next, our newest member-granting challenge across Lake Erie begins on the 25th. Kudos to Wally McMinn, Tom Munson and their helpers, in pulling this challenge together over the past two years! In September, we are as busy as ever with three challenges to stay tuned up with. On Lake Michigan we have the Solo Scramble on the 7th with the sister challenge, the Lower Lake Huron Solo on the 8th. Wrapping up the season is the St Clair Solo and perennial favorite, Big Al's Steak Roast. Download the applications and sign up today, if you haven't already.

On a personal note, while I would rather be sailing in one of the challenges, I will be sailing with the tall ship *Appledore IV* to Lake Michigan for port visits to Port Washington and Kenosha for their maritime festivals. If you are in the area, stop by and say hello.

The season is only half done, although it feels like it is slipping away too fast. I for one could use an extra month just to slow down and enjoy a little recreational sailing and family time. But duty calls!

Be safe and have a wonderful summer! We'll see you on the lakes.
Rob



The Chicago -Mac Redux
by Tony Driza

The 29th running of the Port Huron to Mackinac and the simultaneous 11th Chicago - Mackinac are in the books, but not without what has become the norm over the past couple of years – light air on Lake Michigan, accompanied this year by wicked hordes of biting black flies. I now know how they can drive herds of elk to the point of jumping off cliffs to escape their fury!

The Chicago – Mac started well enough, and within a few hours into the Challenge, skippers were putting up chutes and were heading right up the rhumb line for Point Betsie. The sailing was easy, the breezes favorable, and the miles piled up without too much fanfare. One who didn't sail the rhumb line was the perennial Wisconsin shore inhabitant, John Hoskins – a move that would pay off handsomely for him later on in the Challenge when he would wind up with a fair breeze to the north of those struggling in light air from Big Sable Point to the Manitous.

Alas, all good winds eventually peter out, and the first fading for yours truly came off of Big Sable Point, northwest of Ludington. Other boats in the area such as *Black Pearl*, *Moondance*, and *Sovereign* began ghosting about the lake – when the winds quit, the black flies really attacked with a vengeance. I can honestly say that nothing seemed to have much of an effect on them as they bit through everything in search of a meal from my ankles. Jim McLaren and I ghosted to stops within feet of each other, talking easily from our cockpits, and the joke became that we should just raft off and party waiting for the wind to fill in. The usual frustration of seeing a few cat's paws slip by the boat just far enough away to miss them set in, and even if we were fortunate enough to catch a bit of breeze, it didn't last long. Lot's of work, with very little to show for it!

By Sunday evening, the breeze started in again, slowly at first, but at least the fleet started progressing northward again. Jim McDonnell on *Black Pearl* started pulling away from *Whoa Nellie* again, and was in hot pursuit of *Moondance* and *No Worries*. As the evening wore on and morning gave way to afternoon, the breezes really freshened and most enjoyed blasting up through the Manitou Passage at hull speeds. A few carried chutes just a bit too long and the always adventurous take down in heavy air left a few muttering "never again". It looked promising for a great run up to and through Grays Reef Passage, but radio chatter indicated otherwise. Further to the northeast, boats such as *Il Bodacious*, *Loose Shoes* and *Blue Max* began reporting dying winds with following seas that had them rolling back and forth with sails flogging away. As the breeze lightened, the black flies returned with a renewed vigor, making for some grim conditions. Progress was slow for the most part, and boats headed off to the east and west of the rhumb line searching for some favorable breeze, hoping to escape the wrath of the flies as well. In my case, the Grays Reef Light finally came into view as dusk

was settling on Monday – *Black Pearl* and *Moondance* making the turn through in front of me. It what was becoming a recurring theme, the winds once again died at the entrance to the passage, and the waiting game began once more.

As seems to be the case, boats coming up from behind carried the breeze with them, and boats began congregating about the entrance to the passage – first a couple, then the bobbing of still more masthead lights came into view. So much for the lead I had put on a few boats as they all ghosted up to within a mile or so of where I sat – it was going to be one of those really frustrating evenings, time perhaps to catch up on some sleep.

Tuesday morning dawned with fluky breezes trying to lift the fleet to the finish. Skippers worked the breezes for all they were worth, trying to find some constant, albeit light air that would carry them down the Straits. Some put up chutes, others opted for jib and main, but no one really pulled away from anyone else. Sailing from one windless hole to the next would be my fate for the next several hours as I worked the northern shore of Waugoshance in search of steady breezes. It finally settled in after quite a few sail changes (really fun in the heat, suffering from some serious sleep deprivation) and the closer the fleet made it to the bridge, the more dependable the wind became. Six boats crossed under the bridge within minutes of each other, and most were able to carry chutes the final six miles to the finish.

There is truly nothing like the “*Welcome to Mackinac Island, Skipper*” after a light air affair, and on the positive side, it wasn’t as bad as the ‘06 Chicago – Mac when skippers were still finishing late Wednesday afternoon. Still for me personally, it was a bit of a grind and the encouragement from fellow skippers meant a great deal when things looked bleak. Now a month or so after the fact, the low points don’t seem as cavernous and the fly bites have healed – maybe there’s another one of these left somewhere in the future?



The 29th Port Huron – Mackinac Challenge *by Mike Mahar*

The twenty ninth running of the GLSS Port Huron to Mackinac Challenge had a few different twists this year. The Huron group had the privilege of one of

their old time members, Steve Pettengill, bring his Hunter 54, *Hunter’s Child II* up to do the race. It has been a few years since Steve has sailed on the Great Lakes but with the help of a few other old time GLSS members, he ferried *Hunter’s Child II* all the way from St Augustine, Florida to Port Huron to take on the shifty light airs of Lake Huron and complete his fourth GLSS Solo Challenge. This earned him the honor of becoming the eighteenth recipient of the Peter Fisher Award.

For those of you who are not familiar with the yacht *Hunter’s Child II*, it’s a composite-built hull, with a carbon fiber mast and water ballasting. Besides these features, the sleek red yacht has a unique tripod to support the mast. The carbon fiber rig has a distinctive pre-bend with three sets of spreaders swept back at fifteen degrees. This boat has a whole list of unique features designed into the interior, hull and rig. The nav table and seat are on pivot so as the boat heels the nav station stays level. One of the unique parts of the rigging is that the main sheet doesn’t have a traveler but instead consists of a doubled end on top of a stainless steel arch that spans the back of the boat. The arch also supports solar panels, radar and an array of antennas. These are just a few of the yacht’s special features. For a bit more information on *Hunter’s Child II*, check out the [Hunter Marine web site](#). Now, on to the puff by puff description of this year’s Solo race.

The start of the challenge was delayed by an hour because there wasn’t any wind. This created a problem when the Double Handed Society boats started to show up which made for a lot of congestion in the starting area. The race committee finally got the two GLSS starts off and running towards Goderich on a light air beat up Lake Huron. All the way to Goderich the wind would shift back and forth but only filled in to the ten - fifteen knot range for a few hours. This made the first half of this year’s Solo Challenge very slow going in the early stages. I rounded the Goderich mark around twelve thirty Sunday morning under spinnaker on a close reach using a DSA boat as my shepherd to help me find the mark.

Rounding the mark more than a couple of hours behind *Tango*, (Bob Van Eck’s J-40) I gybed the chute just in time to hear *On Beat* (Harold Beaton’s C&C 30) report that he was rounding the Goderich mark close behind me. It was a cool evening with a three-quarter moon providing dim light in mild shifty air for the beginning of the second leg heading northwest towards Thunder Bay. The chute was set, the Gyro pilot was on and it was time for a nap.

Waking after a two hour nap the boat was still more or less on course, but the moon had set for the evening and stars were out shining with all the wonders of the universe. That's something I just don't get to see living in the suburbs of a large city. My only other company consisted of pairs of nav lights off in the distance from other DSA or GLSS boats heading for Thunder Bay.

This was the second year that the GLSS was using the Tracker, an online website that gave a graphical depiction of the location of all the boats in the Challenge. To accomplish this, each participant had to radio in their coordinates to one of three boats. Each of these boats had a satellite phone that was used to contact a central person on shore who would input the information into the Tracker system software to generate the graphics for the on-line display. Each yacht had a different color line showing where it had gone and where the yacht position was at the last mandatory six hour call in. Not quite live, real time coverage, but the best you can get and still keep the budget down. Included with the web site, each skipper could have a couple of pictures and few words attached, a little like a "my space" for the skippers.

As I awoke from another nap it was still dark. The wind had gone back a few degrees to put it right on edge of between a head sail and being able to carry my spinnaker again. I decided to wait until dawn before resetting the spinnaker. Dawn came early on Sunday morning since it was the day after the Summer Solstice and the weather was clear. So when dawn broke and the wind direction didn't change it was time to be a yacht racer again. This drill happened a lot during this race - the wind would shift from the point of carrying a spinnaker to a head sail and back too many times to count. After the race, I told every one, "the spinnaker went up, the spinnaker came down!"

Later in the morning after some breakfast and domestic duties it was time for a bath! The bucket went over the side and I took sponge bath with the cold water of Lake Huron. Sure made me feel better! After some food and a bath with the boat doing a fine job of driving itself, I tried to lie down to get some more sleep. But that wasn't going to happen - the Shad flies were out for blood. The worst part, it was my blood! Even covering up with a sheet the flies would somehow find a way to bite me. Every time I started to fall asleep I would be awakened by a biting fly. This just made me feel more sleep deprived, so after being jolted awake when the flies bit me, I just stayed in the cockpit and took turns steering, trimming sails and swatting

flies. This went on most of day, until the temperature started to drop and the flies subsided. It was then that I realized leaving the screens out was a big mistake - the cabin was filled with flies! I found that by pulling all the shades and curtains shut so that the only light coming in came from the companionway, I could chase the flies out. The flies would head for the only light source and I would shoo them outside. What a solo Great Lakes sailor does to keep himself entertained!

Through the whole race I kept wondering how Luke Brockman was doing on *Loan Shark*. The GLSS usually doesn't allow twenty-four foot boats, but since a few of us knew Luke and thought he could safely complete the Challenge, we pulled a few strings and let him race. He has done a bunch of St. Clair Solo Races in all sorts of conditions so we felt he would be all right on Lake Huron. Quickly we discovered one drawback - he didn't have a masthead antenna. This gave his small boat a very short radio range since he was using a hand held radio. I am glad his cell phone worked better than his radio; even though I never heard him, he was able to keep in touch with some of the other competitors.

Approaching the wreck of the *Nordmeer* off Thunder Bay it was time for another call in and position swap. I didn't hear *On Beat's* call in, but I also couldn't find his spinnaker with the field glasses. Some of the other yachts heard his position call in so I assumed I had a good lead on my key competitor. The wind was favorable so I cut between the wreck and the shore with spinnaker flying. The hull speed and wind speed were just about the same - a lot on this point of sail, around three to four knots. But if there was enough wind to keep the boat moving I was happy.

Most people think windy races are the hardest. That's not always true! Light shifty winds take constant sail trim and frequent sail changes. Besides all the extra sail handling, you spend a lot more time getting baked by the elements and in this race, getting bitten by flies. When Luke Brockman threw his "hat in the ring", little did he realize what he would be up against. But unknown to us Luke was on his own agenda; besides planning to complete his first GLSS Lake Huron Challenge he was planning to propose to his sweetheart on the Island. He also had a bet going with his dad as to who would have the best corrected time, since they were racing in different divisions. When the cards were played out he won two out of three, but in my book he's a winner! Welcome to the GLSS, Luke and Noel Brockman!!

It was off to the races and heading up into the straights, the wind was still light and variable through most of the night. Since I didn't get my nap on Sunday, I was very tired and easily fell asleep wedged between the cabin and the life lines on the leeward side of the yacht. A couple of times the wind would shift or the spinnaker would collapse waking me up. That would bring on my "call to arms", "I am a yacht racer"; "the spinnaker went up, the spinnaker went down!" There wasn't much reprieve through the night as that routine kept repeating itself. A couple of times the wind was so light I didn't have any hull speed or wind speed but some how a couple of knots of apparent wind kept the boat barely moving. Occasionally I would go below to check to see that we were actually still moving. If the GPS said I was moving I tended to believe it. (My chart plotter is mounted below over the nav station; I have repeater that only tells me the distance and heading from the GPS.)

Before dawn, the wind filled in a little and went forward. Once again the spinnaker came down. It was a lot easier to sail the boat with just the head sail - most boats balance out better under head sail, versus the spinnakers anyway. As dawn broke I could pick out a boat to the north west of me that I was slowly gaining on. I knew it had to be *RATSO!* (Dave Evans Cayenne 41) If I was up with him and my competition was nowhere in sight, I knew I had a good shot at another first. But as the song says "don't count your money while your sitting at the table, there's time enough for counting when the dealing done!" You can always get becalmed while your competition gets a fresh breeze. Luck of the draw in yacht racing!

The GLSS had seventeen entries this year in the Challenge and four of them were first time entries. Luke Brockman on *Loan Shark* was one new member whom I mentioned earlier. His dad Noel on the yacht *Bluejay* was another, as well as fellow Great Lakes Yacht Club member Jeff Golding on his Jeanneau 37, *Eye'm Electric*. I have a feeling we hooked Jeff on solo yacht racing and he will be a repeater. I can't leave out another Canadian who can add his name to ranks of the GLSS - John Ollila on *Finnair*, his Tartan 28, is another veteran of many St. Clair Solo regattas. I would like to say "welcome to the Great Lake Single-handed Society". We need more first timers! Better yet we need more sailors to **repeat** our Challenges. Over seventy percent of our members only do one solo challenge. The first time sure is the toughest and it does get easier with every race. After the first Challenge you know what it takes to make it to the "Island".

Closing in on Spectacle Reef, the first of the early Monday morning radio checks crackled in my ear. It was lot quieter now without the Double-Handed guys on the radio. Swapping my location with *Eye'm Electric*, Jeff informed me that he had just pasted Harold Beaton and *On Beat*. Hearing that I knew all I had to do is complete the race to get a first in my division. Just keep the bow down and the boat moving! I also heard that *Tango* had finished so I knew overall in the fleet I wasn't doing as well as I would have liked. Luck of the draw and the wind gods!

Gradually the wind backed to the west and about mid-day picked up suddenly into the twenty knot range. First I reefed the main, but before long I had to roll up the head sail to about the one hundred percent range. Now the wind was on the chin and it would be a beat to the finish line. *RATSO* wasn't very far ahead of me at the two o'clock call in; I gave Dave Evans a surprise when I told him to give me the same latitude and longitude that he was using. Later I did go down and trade positions again with *Eye'm Electric*. It only seemed like the sincere thing to do!

RATSO is a forty-foot boat but I knew with some luck I could beat him across the finish line. At times we traded tacks and other times, we were on the same tack. Knowing I couldn't beat him with boat speed, I was hoping to get a lift or major shift that would give me enough advantage to beat him to the island. So I chose to short tack along the shore of Bois Blanc Island, playing my cards close to the shore. *RATSO* chose to stay out in the lake. In the end the cards just didn't play out in my favor. *RATSO* beat me over the finish line by about forth-five minutes.

Even staying close to Bois Blanc Island it was so hazy that it was difficult to see Mackinac Island. The Straights and the islands appeared to be a continuous shore line melting into the horizon. The funny thing was you could smell Mackinac Island five miles away - the unique smell of horse shit! You couldn't see the Island but you could smell it!!

Closing in on the finish line, the last mile was a difficult one - a six-hundred foot "smoker" was also racing me to the finish line. I hoped that I could finish and get out of the freighter's way, before he filled the straights. Beating up towards the green buoy that marked one end of the finish line, I realized I had to throw in two more tacks to make it across the line. My now sore shoulders would have to crank in the head sail two more times before I could call an end to my 2007 Lake Huron Solo

Challenge. The race committee's voice finally did come over the radio with the words I was anxious to hear "Welcome to Mackinac!" The wall of steel shot past me while I fired up the engine and rolled in the head sail. I was ready to take on the Mackinac Island ferries and "hit" the dock.



Tracking the Macs

by Tony Driza

The 2007 Mackinac Challenges were once again viewable to thousands on the world wide web thanks to member David Herring's Tracker program. For those family members, friends and just interested observers, the Tracker provided the opportunity to experience a bit of the exhilaration and frustration that the skippers were experiencing.

To make it all happen, satellite phones were ordered, shoreline volunteers were standing by to input the call-in data into the Tracker program. What could possibly go wrong with just one day to go before the Challenges? Well, plenty, if Murphy has anything to say about it, and he apparently did.

First off, while the shipment of satellite phones made it to the Port Huron skippers, those destined for use in the Chicago Mac were floating about somewhere in the bowels of a FedEx sorting facility in Indianapolis. Repeated calls the night before the race only served to reinforce the fact that they didn't know where they were. Cell phones would work for the first check-in, but after that, there is a cell void that lasts up until Little Sable Point. Those hoping to follow the progress would be more than disappointed when it looked like it would be a great many hours before call ins could be posted. To the rescue came first-time skipper and now new member Arch Van Meter, who had just received his own personal satellite phone shortly before the event. Arch graciously phoned in the first several check-ins, and at 30 boats per call, it was a big job. Thanks Arch for bailing out the Chicago fleet, and allowing us to get the info up on the web!

A second potentially disastrous snafu was avoided when Joanie Golden volunteered to input the data for the Huron skippers. President Rob Robins had been standing by to load the positions, but was unable to do so at the last minute due to a call from the skipper of the *Appeldore IV*, pressing him into service out of Tawas – no internet! It all came together because of the individual effort put forth by volunteers who don't know the meaning of the word

"no"! Additionally, a big "thanks" goes to Cal Karr who put in the positions reported by the skippers on the Lake Michigan side. Cal was there right until the bitter end on Tuesday afternoon when the last of the fly-bitten skippers crossed the finish line.

It is becoming clear that the level of participation in the Macs is going to necessitate a change in the Tracking of the Challenges. There are simply too many skippers phoning in reports, too many potential problems with satellite phones, to make it a viable program much longer. There are several alternatives to the phone in Tracker, one of which got a dry run in this year's Chicago – Mac.

Member Jim McDonnell was able to secure four automatic satellite tracking "bricks" along with PDAs from IonEarth. These have been used in the past to track the Baja 500, and the vendor wanted to try them in our Challenge as well. Being one of the lucky skippers to test drive this device, I found it easy to install (plugged into a DC cigarette adapter), easy to use (simply tap the PDA screen with the stylus) – it was a breeze to use. The other boats who had a chance to try them out were *Black Pearl* (Jim McDonnell) and *Il Bodacious* (Jeff Urbina). A fourth unit destined for use on *Sovereign* (Jim McLaren) appeared to be DOA, underscoring the point that nothing is infallible. Skippers with the PDA devices could call up any other boat with the "brick", and would be shown their relative position and speed. I'm not sure I actually liked giving out that much information, but I admit it was neat to watch it all work. It seemed to me that a lead skipper could use that data to cover all of those who were trying to catch him, and that a skipper in trail would use the data to help make decisions as to which course to steer to find the wind. Meanwhile, the data was automatically updated on the web every 15 minutes or so, allowing the shore-bound viewers a bird's eye view of the event. You can view the archived event by clicking on:

<http://www.ionearth.com/Default.aspx?tabid=60>

Follow the on-screen instructions and you're set to view the event. With a download from GeoEarth, you can even view the event in 3D! Hopefully, we'll be able to move into this sort of technology for the 2008 Challenges. These devices will soon have their own self contained power supply making them even easier to use. The Board would really like to hear how you feel about this type of technology – please let us know!



The 2007 Trans Superior Singlehanded Challenge

by Tony Driza

The 2007 Trans Superior International Yacht Race saw solo skippers from nearly every corner of the Great Lakes make their way to Sault Ste. Marie for the skipper's meeting and the Second Running of the Sault Ste. Marie to Duluth Solo Division. They came from Lake Erie, the southern end of Lakes Huron and Michigan, and from the far corners of Lake Superior to join in the fun – and fun it was!

In the way of a bit of backtracking, the GLSS is allowed to compete in a solo division within the auspices of the regular crewed Trans Superior International Yacht Race. The GLSS handles the solo skippers, and approves first time applicants in the event (there were *nine* this year!). The GLSS Race Committee consisting of Tony Driza, Dick Lappin, Eric Thomas and David Herring worked jointly with the TSRC, primarily Dale Hedtke, to put together the event.

Most of the boats in the Soo opted to moor at the Roberta Bondar Marina on the Canadian side, while a few found the accommodations at the George Kemp Marina next to the *Valley Camp* freighter in the USA Soo more to their liking. Having done both, there are no bad choices – it just depends on where and how one wishes to deal with US and Canadian Customs. Having said that, a band was really cranking it up at Bondar Friday night before the start, and if one thought it loud on the US side, it must have been next to intolerable on the north shore of the St. Mary's River!

Most of the boats locked through on the Canadian side, the exception being most of those who had stayed at Kemp and had family and friends who wished to watch them lock through. It was an orderly lift on both sides, with a very full MacArthur Lock on the USA side lifting boats 21' up to the level of Lake Superior. Crewed boats had hoisted a few of the adventurous to the spreaders to enjoy the view, much to the amusement of the solo sailors who were fending off the lock wall or other boats during the transit. If you've never partaken of a trip through the locks, it's a must for those of us on the Great Lakes.

After an hour and a half of motoring up the Upper St. Mary's River, the fleets found themselves milling about the Gros Cap Light near the starting line. Unlike 2005, this start was promising in that there was actually *wind!* After a slightly tardy start line crew was finally on station, the crewed sailors kicked

it off at 11:19 CDT followed five minutes later by the lone doublehanded entry and **twenty two solo sailors!** Winds were fresh from the ENE, and with uncontained forest fires raging in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the scent of burning pine was heavy in the air (not to mention the low hanging smoke). The fleets made good time up to and out of Whitefish Bay and into the open waters of Lake Superior, where most set chutes and headed for the mandatory rounding of the Keweenaw Peninsula.

Although the conditions weren't particularly demanding, as the first night wore on, a few skippers found themselves dealing with boat woes that added to the chill of the first night on Gitchee-Gumee. First-time skipper Gail Bowdish aboard *Shanti* reported that her spinnaker halyard had become fouled in the masthead furler, and while she was able to get the chute in the sock, it wouldn't come down. It also prevented her from unfurling a headsail, making for some slow going. There was no shortage of advice from the fleet to rectify the situation, and eventually the chute was brought down. It came at the expense of a halyard though, and Gail spent the rest of the Challenge using a single halyard for both genoa and spinnaker.

Meanwhile on *II Bodacious*, skipper Jeff Urbina reported a rather largish rip in his spinnaker that had forced him to take it down. At the time, it didn't seem to be repairable, and rather than risk further damage, he too opted to go it main and jib, hoping that those conditions would persist and allow him to stay up near the front of the pack (he did fix it later with help from the solo sailor's do-it-all solution – duct tape!). The fleets generally speaking made good time to the Keweenaw, where the first of some light air descended upon them. Those that had taken a more northerly approach and stayed further out in the lake kept moving, while those closer to Manitou Island ghosted to a stop, or slowed to a crawl. Limp sails persisted for a while, but when they eventually filled, it was with a vengeance. The winds increased suddenly from the west, and skippers for the most part chose to head out into Superior in the general direction of Isle Royale. A few of the faster boats such as *Polar Bear* and Brian Van Wieren's *Zapada* were able to blast down the SW side of the peninsula before heading back out into the Lake, distancing themselves from the rest of the fleet. Reefing down became the norm and seas built into the 4'-5' range fairly quickly. While some skippers reported "washing machine" conditions, the heavier boats such as *Black Pearl* and *Whoa Nellie* settled in for some enjoyable close-hauled work.

On one of the tacks heading out toward Isle Royale, first-time skipper Rick Umpierre aboard *Princess Marijke* found himself dealing with a situation that few skippers have encountered. An errant spinnaker halyard had become fouled in Rick's rudder post, rendering the steering for all intents and purposes, inoperable. Not wishing to head NW for the Canadian shore any longer, Rick, a former Navy diver, donned a wetsuit and weight belt, and while tethered to the boat, went over the side and cleared the rudder. Not for the faint of heart, to be sure!

As the fleets approached the Apostle Islands, the winds again petered out, and skippers worked mightily in the light air to keep going. Dick Lappin aboard *Ginger Kay* didn't let light air get in his way of a record time finish, and put up a chute which allowed him to put on a few miles from his fellow competitors. Numerous freighters upbound and downbound from Duluth and Superior appeared on the horizon and worked their way through the fleets. A few scattered rainshowers ushered in some new wind which allowed the skippers to get moving again, to the relief of all. It wasn't without its consequences though as again, a few skippers kept chutes flying perhaps a little too long, resulting in some foredeck adventures. Most were simply delighted with the prospect of moving, and used the opportunity to make up some lost ground on fellow competitors.

Not all was well with the entire fleet though, and during the third day first-time skipper Tom Treichel aboard *Aquila* noticed water on the cabin sole. The search was on to find the source, but a quick fix didn't appear to be in the cards. With some moderate seas still running, Tom thought it best to head for the lee of Outer Island in the Apostle chain to sort things out. It was there that he discovered the source of water was coming from inside the boat from his potable water tank, rather than outside. It was a quick fix, but to Tom's dismay, the wind had now died behind Outer Island, and he was relegated to whistling for a breeze that took its time in coming.

By early afternoon of the third day, the leaders had finished, and were tied in their slips – most were in the abandoned freighter slip simply known as Slip #2. The middle tier found themselves staring at a forecast of light winds from the SSE, with a veering to the W and increasing to 20 plus knots. Sails went limp; spirits sank as the forecast of light winds proved too optimistic and boats ground to a halt. *Blue Max*, *Shanti*, *Ginger Kay*, *Journey*, and *Whoa Nellie* found themselves 20-25 miles NE of Duluth in the light winds when they finally encountered the

rapidly veering and increasing winds to the WNW. For them the remainder of the Challenge was one of being lifted, headed, forced to tack, but all the while, making good time to a daylight finish in Duluth. The remainder of the fleet saw those winds peter out, and were forced to endure much more time at sea – they truly got their money's worth for their entry fee!



Pete Shelquist and the President's Challenge Cup
Photo courtesy of Pete Shelquist

Ultimately, all twenty two starters finished, with the result being ***nine new lifetime members of the GLSS!*** Most said they would be back in 2009, some said maybe, and others.....?

All the skippers and their wives/significant others enjoyed a wonderful awards ceremony and dinner at the Inn on Lake Superior which was arranged through the TSRC. It was a fitting conclusion to an exciting event, and one that has left many skippers already marking the calendar for August, 2009.



Trans Superior Tracking *by Tony Driza*

For the first time ever in any event in which the GLSS has participated, automatic satellite race tracking was *officially* enabled to track the progress of the fleet as they battled their way from Sault Ste. Marie to Duluth. The tracking was actually set up by the Trans Superior International Yacht Race Committee, and FIS Tracking was contracted to display the positions of the yachts.

Skippers mounted a transponder to the stern rail of their yachts, and once per hour a position was sent via satellite for display on the internet. The units were a bit bulky, at about 8 pounds per transponder, but required no modifications to the boat, as they were all self-contained power supplies within the transponder. You can still review the race by going to the FIS website:

<http://trackinfo.fistracking.com/transup/>

As a last minute bonus, and a wonderful opportunity to compare two different tracking services head-to-head, member Jim McDonnell put us in touch with the folks from IonEarth Tracking. They graciously invited the solo sailors to equip their boats, at no charge, with a tracking "brick" to allow them to track the Challenge. The only codicil was that since the TSRC had already contracted with another vendor, and since various sponsors had ponied up funds for that program, we couldn't publicize the additional tracking device on our website live. It was strictly for evaluation purposes, and the GLSS Board of Directors had access to the IonEarth tracking to assist them in making the decision as to whether or not to use the IonEarth devices in future events.

These devices simply plugged into a 12 volt cigarette adapter, or could be hardwired into any 12 power supply. They were light-weight, and other than a constant flashing red light on the unit (which was a bit annoying during the night hours), were completely unobtrusive. The devices sent updated positions every 10-15 minutes and the progress was subsequently displayed on the internet. This system uses **Virtual Earth** mapping, and the zoom level is nothing short of incredible to view. In addition, if you download and install the beta 3D version, you are able to view the event from a horizon point of view. Is it perfect – no, but it is an incredible piece of technology that is also a nice safety back-up. You can view the Challenge in replay mode by pointing your browser to:

<http://iridium.ionearth.com/MapperVer1/tracker.aspx?tour=101>

To replay the event, simply select the desired level of zoom and click the 'Start Replay' button. That pulls up all of the boats, and you can follow the progress of the fleet. Pause if you wish and zoom in/out to see how your favorite boat was doing at any given time against the other.

The GLSS Board would love to hear your impressions of the two tracking systems. If you have one, please send it to Tony Driza:

tdriza@wmis.net

It is possible that one of these two companies will be providing tracking for our events in the future – here is a grand opportunity for you to help us out in the evaluation process!



Did you know?

It takes only eight minutes to fill and seven minutes to empty the MacArthur Lock (the first and smaller of the Soo Locks). The Poe Lock, which will accommodate the 1000 footers, only takes twelve minutes to fill and ten minutes to empty. All of this takes places without any electricity!

Here's how the locks work:

<http://www.exploringthenorth.com/soo/work.html>

Enjoy!

GLSS Event Survey

by Tony Driza

Did you compete in one of the Solo Challenges this year or have you done one in the past five years? Did you make it to a recent AGM or perhaps one of the Open Houses? If so, we're looking to hear from you as we attempt to streamline the events, and improve them as we can for future skippers and members.

The GLSS Board of Directors would really appreciate your input by completing a short interactive survey form now posted on the GLSS website. ***It would make the task infinitely easier if you would submit the form via email because the data gathered can easily be incorporated into a spreadsheet.*** If you'd rather, you may download the form to your computer, fill it out, print it, stuff it into an envelope, stick on a stamp, and haul it out to the mailbox. The link to access the survey is:

<http://www.solosailor.org/pdfs/GLSS07survey.pdf>

It isn't necessary to have done one of the events this year to participate in the survey. There is certainly no shortage of opinions within the ranks of solo sailors – yours is very much valued!

Thanks in advance for your participation!

Is Your Software Up-To-Date?

HELP!!!

Other than being a great Beatles flick, some other help is needed. As the GLSS strives to accommodate an increasing number of members, and provide the maximum amount of information from what amounts to be a "volunteer army", it is apparent that the internet is the way to go. It costs very little, it is fast, there is no waste, little labor, and we can get the information to you quickly.

The drawback is that while most have computers, some are still in the "horse ad buggy" era. Software which enables us to efficiently disseminate information may not work well with either older operating systems (such as Windows98) or older versions of Internet Explorer (please don't tell me you're still running IE 4.0) or Adobe Acrobat Reader. You can really take advantage of all the GLSS website has to offer if you take the time to upgrade your operating system (that will likely cost something) or at least upgrade your software (such as Acrobat Reader) to the latest version compatible with your operating system. Updates such as Acrobat Reader are FREE – go to the website, and on any 'Race Documents' page, you'll find an Acrobat Reader link. Simply download/install the latest version that is compatible with your operating system. Quick, easy, free, and we all win!

A thousand thanks for taking the time to upgrade your systems!



Previewing the Fall *Solo Challenger*

The fall edition of the *Solo Challenger* (which is also the season finale) will hopefully be a gala picture issue. We hope to have photos of all the events that took place in 2007. If you have a great shot that you'd like to share with the masses, please [feel free to email it to me](#).

By the time the next issue comes out, the Lake Erie Solo Challenge, the Lake Michigan Solo Scramble, the Lower Huron Solo, and the St. Clair Solo/Big Al's Steak Roast will all be history. We'll have recaps of those events, and hopefully, we'll have some new members to welcome to the GLSS by virtue of their successful completion of the Lake Erie Solo.

We'll have some preliminary information regarding the 2008 Annual General Membership Meeting, which will take place in Detroit, Michigan – stay tuned for the details and when they are finalized, mark your calendars and plan to attend.

As always, if you feel the urge to sit down and write something, [feel free to submit it](#) and we'll work it into the next *Solo Challenger*. ***The deadline for the submission of articles and photos will be October 31, 2007.*** We'd really love to have recaps of the fall events, especially from first-time competitors, but you don't have to limit it to the fall races. If you have a Mac or Trans Superior tall tale to tell, feel free to send it as well.

Time to head back to Duluth to bring back *Whoa Nellie*. My son and I will hopefully have a nice cruise back through the Apostles – maybe there's a story in there somewhere too. I'd better pack the long johns – as I write, it is 36 degrees in Grand Marais, MN.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!



Upcoming Events in 2007

August 25	Lake Erie Solo
September 7	L. Michigan Scramble
September 8	Lower Huron Solo
September 29	St. Clair Solo & Big Al's Steak Roast

Be sure to check the website often for details on these events!

<http://www.solosailor.org/>