



The
**SOLO
CHALLENGER**

*The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society
Summer 2012*

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2012 A Challenging Year

By Paul Nickerson, GLSS President

From some heavy air beating to light air circles, 2012 was a challenging year for the GLSS. My friends who followed the tracking for the Mac now have a better understanding of beating into the wind and I know the tacking angles of a keel centerboard Tartan 37. I did finally make it to Mackinac for 2 nights of fun. It was also great to see most of the Huron Skippers who dropped out make it to the awards banquet.

2013 GLSS Events

- ❖ **January 26** GLSS AGM - Chicago
- ❖ **June 22** Port Huron & Chicago Solo Challenge
- ❖ **July 13** Lake Ontario 300 Solo Challenge (corrected)
- ❖ **August 3** Trans Superior Solo Challenge
- ❖ **August 17** Erie Solo Challenge

See the GLSS website at www.solosailors.org for more details and entry forms.

Two of the highlights of the Mackinac Awards Banquet were watching 7 new members sip rum from the President’s Trophy Cup while Rick McLaren and Ken Verhaeren drifted across the finish line. I assume someone saved them some food.

The Lake Erie Challenge was a complete drifter and when there was wind it was a beat. I dropped out thinking it was just as important to help handle details at Erie YC and knew I would otherwise be late. I was amazed to watch the fleet come in with the first boat not finishing until Wednesday. Watching the tracking was interesting to see where the wind was, if any.

The first Superior 600 saw 3 boats finish with very interesting final results. It proved to be an interesting concept with boats starting and finishing near their home port while sailing the same course in different

Articles on 2012
Solo Challenges Experiences Wanted!

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weather. There will be 2 years to think about it as 2013 will have the Trans Superior on the schedule.

If you want more details like how to get a boat with a 7 foot draft through 6 feet of water plan to attend the AGM, January 26th in Chicago. We'll have a great time recruiting sailors at Strictly Sail and have a great dinner at Maggiano's. Hope to see everyone there.

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Editor's Note:

Rick McLaren is a GLSS board member from the Chicago side. He sails Dulcinea, a Swan 37 and has completed 6 Solo Macs all from Chicago of course. Here he provides added incentives for attending the Chicago AGM in January. Could it be that he works for the Chicago Visitors Bureau? The AGM is scheduled for January 26, 2013 so mark your calendar. More information and registration will be provided soon on the GLSS web site.

2013 AGM—Come To Chicago!

By Rick McLaren

The 2013 GLSS AGM will be held at Maggiano's Restaurant on Saturday night, January 26, 2013. It's just a few blocks from Navy Pier and many nearby hotels, and a good time will be had by all.

While you're in Chicago, consider these other distractions:

Strictly Sail: The GLSS will sponsor a booth at Strictly Sail again in 2013. Please volunteer to staff our booth for an hour or so by contacting Jim McLaren jgmilndpub@aol.com. The show runs from Thursday, January 24 through Sunday, January 27, 2013 (duh!). We particularly need volunteers from the Chicagoland area for Thursday and Sunday so that the out-of-town skippers can have some fun in the booth on Friday and Saturday. www.strictlysailchicago.com

Blues and Jazz: None of the big blues bars or jazz clubs has released a schedule of acts for January. However, there will be plenty going on after Strictly Sail closes down each evening, "you can count on it." Here are a few to check out: Blue Chicago; www.bluechicago.com; B.L.U.E.S.; www.chicagobluesbar.com; Buddy

Guy's Legends; www.buddyguys.com; California Clipper; www.californiaclipper.com; House of Blues; www.houseofblues.com; Kingston Mines; www.kingstonmines.com; Rosa's Lounge; www.rosaslounge.com; Shaw's Crab House; (downtown; 21 E. Hubbard); www.shawscrabhouse.com; Andy's Jazz Club, <http://www.andysjazzclub.com/>; The Green Mill, <http://www.greenmilljazz.com/>; The Jazz Showcase, <http://www.jazzshowcase.com/>; Katerina's, <http://www.katerinas.com/>

Theatre: Who knows how many of the current shows will still be playing in January? If you are a live theatre fan, here are some sites you might want to check out: www.broadwayinchicago.com; American Theatre Company, www.atcweb.org; Steppenwolf Theatre, www.steppenwolf.org; www.writerstheatre.org; www.googmantheatre.org; www.chicago-theatre.com;

Sports: Chicago Bulls, Friday, January 25, 2013, at 7:00 against Golden State at the United Center. The Chicago Blackhawks will not be playing that weekend. The Chicago Bears will be off that weekend because the NFC and AFC Championship Games were the weekend before, 1/20/2013.

Museums: The Art Institute of Chicago, www.artic.edu; Museum of Science and Industry, www.msi.org; Field Museum of Natural History, www.fieldmuseum.org; Shedd Aquarium, www.sheddaquarium.org; Museum of Contemporary Art, www.mcachicago.org; Adler Planetarium, www.adlerplanetarium.org; Chicago History Museum, www.chicagohistory.org

Lyric Opera of Chicago: on Thursday, January 24th, the Opera will be presenting *La Boheme* at 2:00 P.M. At 8:00 P.M. it will present Renee Fleming and Susan Graham in concert. *WARNING: the opera is frequently sold out, so if you want to attend either of these performances, order your tickets now.* www.lyricoperachicago.org

So, come to Chicago for the 2013 AGM. See you there. –Rick McLaren

“There’s more, but I think you get the idea; you can make a mini vacation out of the AGM.” Dan Pavlat

Editor’s Note:

Congratulations to Chuck Buckingham who completed his first Solo Mac from Chicago to become a GLSS member this year. Chuck sails Miller Time a Beneteau 36.7. In this article he shares his insights on the race.

My First Solo – Notes from a Rookie’s Playbook

By Chuck Buckingham

In February, I turned 33 years old. With the usual reflection that goes along with another year passing, I decided that this was the year I was going to do something really different. I decided to do the Chicago Mac Solo Challenge (thank you Jeff Stack on Compensable for the friendly encouragement). I registered for the race, started buying all the safety gear (including the rental of a life raft) and was getting ready to go...the only thing missing was a boat (I had sold my C&C 29 the summer before). Come April, I took possession of my ‘new to me’, but ‘previously enjoyed’ Beneteau 36.7, completed the 100 mile qualifier sail and was ready to go. It was a very busy spring with the qualifier, learning my new boat and getting mentally and physically prepared for the challenge.

As with any rookie there are copious learning’s from year one. “If I only knew this”, or “if I only did that” ... With this said, here are some notes from my rookie playbook. If I could go back in time and have breakfast with Chuck on the morning of June 23 before he left the dock in Chicago here’s what I’d tell him. Now Chuck’s never been the sharpest tool in the shed, so I have structured my thoughts in simple 3 buckets – what he should start doing, what he should stop doing, and what he should continue doing! Here goes...

START

- Sleep early. Rick and Ken told all 7 of us rookies from the Chicago side to start slow and ease off

from there - easier said than done gentlemen! With absolutely no wind at the start, it was a drifter of all drifters of a beginning. I stayed up the entire first day worried that if I went down for a nap that I’d wake up to that dreaded 0.0 reading on the knot log. So a nice calm, slow first day - ideal for proactively charging the batteries – was wasted as I was far too excited to sit (let alone lay) down. On Monday, I was trying my best to keep my eyes open between quick naps, and I wished I’d slept more on day one. Next Year – I’ll cross the start line and then start thinking about my first nap.

- Thinking 3 steps ahead. On several occasions, I would just act (time to gibe) with no thought as to what I was going to do next. You may be able to get away with this on a crewed boat, but when you are on your own – you’ve got to be proactive. Towards the end of the race, I was talking aloud through the steps of the gibes, douses etc. This forced me to think 3 steps ahead – shame that I only started doing this while I was in the Mackinaw Straits.

STOP

- Losing my cool in the lulls – cursing at the lack of wind, and letting the flies (or fresh water sharks as our friend Cole from Australia calls them) get the better of me does not help move the boat. Next year, during the lulls, I’m putting on some loud music, and I am going to sing like there is no tomorrow and just keep looking for ripples on the water.
- Second guessing myself and my boat. Sunday night was a bit ugly (cold, wet and dark with the winds out of the north) but the boat had adequate canvas up given the conditions, and I need to trust my gut and ‘keep calm and carry on.’

CONTINUE

- Camaraderie with other sailors. The radio banter was a ton of fun and kept the

competition friendly. I can't imagine if we only used the radio for our position updates. Thanks for all the laughs guys!

- Frequently eating & drinking (water) throughout the race. I had the boat well provisioned and enjoyed a variety of warm and cold meals...although hopefully next year my friends on Alfa Puppy (pizza) and Kismet (fresh pasta) will share some of their gourmet meals with me.
- Seeing the glass as half full – this was a challenge and not everything went perfect from the start line to the finish – but overall, it was a great experience and with a positive attitude, the small screw ups don't weigh heavier than all the good times.
- Keep the end in mind – that first beer after crossing the finish line tasted SOO GOOD!

Overall, I had an absolutely amazing time, I wanted a challenge and boy did I get a challenge. Thanks to all the competitors for allowing this rookie to join in the fun. You are a great group of sailors and I'm honored to have the chance to be associated with such a fantastic group. Special thanks to Ken and the race committee for putting this all together – you guys did an amazing job!

If anyone aspires to complete a solo challenge, and you have a seaworthy sailboat, a solid sailing background and the desire to challenge yourself mentally and physically, I'd strongly encourage you to give the GLSS a try. Life is far too short to miss out on such an awesome experience like this.

See you all next year! Until then, MILLER TIME will be standing by on 72!

Editor's Note:

Cole Butterworth from Newcastle on the east coast of Australia offers a unique perspective on the Mac Solo Challenge. His home waters are the Tasman Sea which has a nasty reputation so how much of a challenge could our little lake possibly be? Congratulations to Cole who is now a GLSS member.

2012 Solo Mac An International Perspective **By Cole Butterworth**

The Solo Mac, 300 miles of sailing on an enclosed freshwater lake, Chicago Illinois to Michigan's Mackinac Island, How tough could it be?

March 2012, life was getting somewhat routine. I was in need of a challenge. Late one evening, sitting at my computer in suburban Newcastle in Australia, I happened upon the GLSS web site. Prominent on the GLSS home page were details of the Solo Mac Race, from Chicago to Mackinac Island. I read some of the stories of previous events and quickly realized that this was the challenge I was seeking. Little did I know what the logistics of participating in a yacht race 10,000 miles around the globe from home would entail. Obviously too far to sail my own boat, there is a yacht to organize, insurance to be arranged and GLSS qualifying requirements to be met. Also the yacht had to be complete with all required safety equipment and sails. For new entrants to the solo races, the race organizers require a qualifier voyage to be undertaken and completed some 30 days prior to race start. This would be an issue, given the distance I had to travel to compete.

I had never chartered a yacht before so where does one start to try to convince someone to charter their pride-and-joy to a complete stranger? I decided to email the race organizers and let fate take its course.

Fate, or Kismet, seemed to play a major role in events over the next 3 months. A couple of contacts were supplied and both were contacted. The race committee requested my sailing resume and my bio. I guess I had to be a worthy person to compete!

The yacht that seemed most suitable was chosen. This was a J35 from Milwaukee by the name of Nemesis.

Next step was to obtain insurance and to arrange for a delayed qualifier voyage to be undertaken. Insurance was negotiated. It was decided that the qualifier would be the trip from Milwaukee to Chicago via the Michigan mid-lake buoy - total distance around 101 miles. I was due to arrive in Milwaukee in the week prior to race start. This would give me time to familiarize myself with the boat and to sail to Chicago ready for the start. Little did I know the weather gods had other ideas. They had decided to provide strong southerly winds for the week prior to race start. Just the direction I needed to sail. Due to the weather I did not arrive in Chicago until the day prior to race start. The trusty SPOT tracker had been configured and turned on, so race control knew exactly where I was, what speed I was sailing, and probably what was on the menu for lunch! Big brother now had a new name, SPOT!

All was now ready. The boat organized, insurance paid and provisions obtained. The final paperwork was completed at the Skippers meeting on the night prior to race start. The Skippers meeting is a good place to meet and get to know the other skippers. It is a common misconception that solo skippers are anti-social types that don't go sailing with all their friends. In reality, they tend to be very sociable people who just happen to enjoy their own company as much as the company of others. The Skippers meeting was therefore a very friendly get together and many friendships were forged.

Next day, Saturday 23rd June 2012, was race start day. The weather prediction for the 9 am race start was for light winds. This meant a slow start was on the cards. VHF channel 72 was the allocated race channel. All entrants would monitor this channel and most would remain logged onto this frequency both day and night for the whole race. Almost straight away the chit-chat began on Channel 72. This chit-chat was to continue until the finish at Mackinac Island in roughly 3 days time. At any time of the day the radio would crackle into life. What is your position, what is the weather at your location, what is on the menu for dinner? The constant chatter was to become a highlight of the race and a great way to get to know the other skippers a little better. It is amazing what comes up in conversation at 2 o'clock in the morning. Another unique feature of solo racers is, that although we are all competing against each other, we are at the same time looking out for each other. Weather warnings and sightings of freighters would be transmitted over the

chat frequency to warn the rest of the fleet. This level of community is sadly missing in the more popular fully crewed yacht race fleets.

My race was to last until midnight on Tuesday 26th, 3 days and 13 hours since the start. The weather ranged from many holes with absolutely no wind, (I must sack the tactician!), to a gusty cold front that hit the fleet on Sunday night. Interspersed around these extremes were many hours of wonderful sailing.

The sense of camaraderie that is solo yacht racing was highlighted again after I had finished the race and docked at the Mackinac Island harbor marina. I had crossed the finish line with the spinnaker wrapped around the forestay. Definitely not the memory of the race I was anticipating. It had been like that since Grey's Reef some 20 miles ago. My plan was to leave the sail until morning when I would attempt again to get it down. However, I had no sooner docked Nemesis at Mackinac Island marina when four of my fellow competitors clambered onboard and proceeded to tame the beast that was the wrapped spinnaker. Ideas were tossed around, a bosons chair rigged in case it was needed to climb to the top of the mast and headlamps switched on. It was 1 o'clock in the morning. Maybe we could disconnect the forestay and lay it on the dock to unwrap the sail, maybe we could go to the masthead and unwrap from there? A voice from a bystander on the dock startled us all. "Has anyone tried letting the halyard go?" As I was the skipper, all eyes were now on me. Gee, in my state of over-tiredness, I had not thought of that. We let the halyard go and gave the sail a tug. Down it came. Hallelujah, I was a very pleased to have the sail safely down, and very grateful for the concern shown by my fellow competitors. The camaraderie of the solo sailor was alive and well on Mackinac Island that night.

It was time to catch up with the skippers already in, and to wait for the skippers yet to finish. There were certainly some stories to tell at the race presentation.

The race complete and the presentation over, it was time to cruise Nemesis back to Milwaukee and finish my Lake Michigan adventure. I had travelled some 10,000 miles in order to race 333 miles. Was it worth the effort? Absolutely. Lake Michigan is a wonderful place to sail and at times provides tough conditions that make these races memorable. Some great friends were made

and some not so great friends made, those damn flies!
Would I do it again? Absolutely.

Editor's Note:

Gene Joelson has completed 3 Lake Ontario Solo Challenges. He sails Joely Rose a Catalina 36 Mk 1. In this article he recounts his experience in the 2012 LO300 as it is nicknamed.

LO300 Solo Challenge 2012

By Gene Joelson

The 2012 Lake Ontario 300 Solo Challenge found six participants at the start line:

Better Still, Elite 326, David Courtney
Finito, Beneteau 46, Carl Ricciuti
JoelyRose, Catalina 36 Mk1, Gene Joelson
Moonbeam, Catalina 34, Allan Belovarac
Mythos, CS Merlin 36, Ted Spanos
Why Not, Express 30, Chuck Watson

The race started under very light winds with the solo sailors in the first start. The light winds meant that before long the solo fleet was surrounded by the many other racers which made for an exciting and interesting first day. After rounding the first mark off of Toronto, the wind built nicely for the long run east to Main Duck. By sunset the wind was very strong and well positioned for an overnight spinnaker run. Ted was one of the first to use a flying sail which led to his first critical challenge. In the dark, while flying downwind, the shackle fastening his sheets to his asymmetric released - to his shock and surprise! Ted relates a good story about bringing the flying sail in and re-setting it; he says he prefers emergencies like that to happen in the dark since, "It's less scary at night – you can't see the water!".

The wind held strong around Main Duck and made for a fast approach to the Oswego mark. Some were lucky to make it around but others, like JoelyRose, were stuck within clear sight of the mark, trying to respond to every changing puff of wind to make the boat go. By sunset, the wind built again, first from the south and by morning it was on the nose, of course. Overnight was kept exciting by an amazing lightning storm with multiple lightning strikes directly on the land – quite a sight! The storm moved over the Lake bringing some

rain and lightning, but the scary stuff tended to stay up in the clouds, thankfully!

The run west along the south shore became a challenge as the southwest wind built to gusts over 35 kts, forcing skippers to take the wheel in hand. Reefing sails under such conditions was challenging, requiring fast leaps from behind the wheel to the winches and back again, between wind gusts. The wind raged all afternoon with very large waves with short wavelengths. JoelyRose pounded into the wind storm for more than three hours making one wish for a proper thunderstorm rather than a wind storm – at least a thunder storm passes relatively quickly compared to that experience.

Ted was the first to round the Niagara mark for the final leg of the race and head toward another big lighting and rain storm moving west to east over Toronto. He observed constant lightning strikes hitting the ground ashore, and decided to shorten sail to let it pass ahead of him. This of course did not happen and he received the full effect while temporarily sheltering below. It didn't take long to realize that he might as well get Mythos going again because the storm would not cooperate by moving away. As Gene finally worked his way through the wind storm and was approaching Niagara he observed the storm over Toronto and thought about how Mother Nature dishes out punishment in the middle of the Lake, and then serves up another storm for desert at the finish.

Sailing the last leg in the dark was quite a challenge. Gene encountered an unexpected issue with instruments. While on a port tack he kept sailing into irons which was extremely frustrating. JoelyRose lost quite a bit of time on that last leg. Gene was reminded again that after 275 miles of single handed sailing, one's problem solving ability can become dulled. Recognizing the symptoms of a problem and figuring out how to compensate to keep the boat moving can take much longer than it would on an afternoon sail. Eventually he realized that the wind indicator was out of balance causing him to sail the boat too close to the wind. By setting the boat heading a further 30 degrees off of the wind he was able to maintain boat speed in the rough seas.

While Allan has considerable sailing experience on Lake Erie, this was his first experience on Lake Ontario. He found the heavy winds to be a significant challenge and for many hours made little headway which dropped him

behind the fleet. To his credit he persevered and completed the race when he would have found it much easier to accept a DNF.

Ted in Mythos took the Ross Seeley trophy for first place, JoelyRose was second, and Why Not was third. Chuck was awarded the GLSS President's Cup and Allan received the well-deserved Perseverance Trophy.

The race proved to be another very satisfying experience. The Solo LO300 is the ultimate "man against nature" challenge on Lake Ontario. The race highlighted again the need to prepare and prepare and prepare your boat and your mental state. Nature can throw the full range of weather at racers in the three (or so) days of the race. Equipment failure will never happen under ideal conditions of light wind and blue sky, it happens in the dark when the boat is sailing hard. Confronting and overcoming the many challenges by relying solely on one's own resourcefulness and determination to see it through is part of what makes the race so satisfying. The periods of beautiful weather where the boat is tuned to almost sail itself provides opportunity to think, to plan, and recharge one's spirit. The race makes one a better, more confident sailor, and brings one "closer" to one's boat. It enables the skipper to gain a deep understanding of how the boat responds to the weather, to changes in heading, to subtle changes in set of sail, and how changes in weather helm change the boat's speed. It inspires the skipper to try harder and to dream of improvements to boat, rigging and sails that can be completed over the winter to make next year's race even better.

The skippers who participated this year know that there are more sailors who are thinking about rising to the challenge of the Solo LO300 in 2013. We encourage you to join us at the start line!

2012 Lake Erie Solo Challenge

Paul Nickerson

The 6th annual Lake Erie Solo Challenge offered every possible challenge to the fleet, even getting to the starting line. With water levels running low Lake Erie was as much as 2 feet below typical levels. Add to that the barometric effect of the North Cape YC basin and the 6 foot or so levels at the entrance and the challenge was on.

The first challenge saw John Lubimir pulling off the amazing feat of sailing the Singlehanded Trans Pac race from San Francisco to Hawaii in a new to him Quest 30, *Flight Risk*. First off, congratulations to John for finishing the 2100 miles to Hawaii. A little known story was that after the finish John lead the effort in Hawaii to recover the boat of one of the sailors who had to be evacuated for medical reasons. That's the GLSS and Singlehanded spirit that makes us a little different from other sailors.

At that point John then had to get *Flight Risk* back to Lake Erie. Ship it back to California, drive it cross country to Michigan and get it rigged, no problem! *Flight Risk* was rigged and sitting near the dock at NCCY with time but no water to spare and it was time to get the rest of the fleet in. We watched as a big boat tried to leave the harbor only to get stuck in the silt at the harbor mouth and turn around. Checking our fleet draft measurements we knew the 6' draft boats could probably get in but may move the muck doing it. But Dave Evans drew 7' and we hoped he could make it. Thursday evening *Ratso* approached the entrance and we warned Dave on the radio it would take full throttle and a little luck to make it in. Dave stuck it in the mud and all the sailors piled onto Wally McMinn's *Odyssey* to go help. By the time we got out *Ratso* was free and back out on the Lake so we tried the next harbor north. Not enough water there either.

There was talk about anchoring the boat out but Dave would have none of that. He was determined to sail it in and with a little help from John Lubimir and myself, we got the mainsail up and with the mainsheet in hard on a beam reach with 15 knots of breeze, about 40 degrees of heel and full throttle we were at some bar for dinner and last call by 2300.

Friday we watched as the water levels went up and down a foot and Saturday morning they were back to a lower level.



Chip McCullough and his race committee borrowed a trawler and North Cape members came out with their dinghy to get Dave Evans and John Lubimir out into Lake Erie for the Challenge.



The bulk of the fleet sat together trying to get over the Southeast Shoal during the night. A Canadian breeze filled in during the morning and the boats that could stay in it worked their way down the lake while others struggled and found themselves heading for Cleveland. Monday morning the fleet sat in a stationary cold trough which triggered a couple of waterspouts for viewing.



A couple of people standing on the boom and hanging from the shrouds helped do the trick with only a 5 minute delay for the start.



Behind the fleet a rather large cell formed on Lake Erie and dumped a lot of rain on Cleveland but nothing on the fleet. It was a struggle for every mile and some boats counted more 360s than miles. Few boats covered 100 miles in the first 48 hours and little wind was forecast for the week. By late Monday afternoon about half the fleet was motoring towards Erie. Monday evening the winds filled in to reefing strength for a while getting the sailing fleet past Erie but the breeze was short lived. There was no offshore breeze to speak of and the goal was still just to keep the boats



With a little bit of wind on the nose it was a light air beat to start. The winds got very patchy as boats split in all directions just trying to keep moving.

moving. Sitting at the Erie Yacht Club I was amused watching the tracking and trying to guess where the wind was. Evans and Lubimir enjoyed a close 2 boat duel from Erie to Buffalo and back but even with a large lead, they were not always the fastest boats. Tom Hughes had found a hole in the middle of the Lake and struggled much of Tuesday to clear Long Point. On shore we struggled to decide if we should push the awards banquet to Thursday as it was obvious some of the boats would be in late. With 5 of the 7 boats around Buffalo we decided to push the banquet back to late afternoon.

Ratso and *Flight Risk* engaged in a tacking duel from Dunkirk to Erie and John Ollila on *Finnair* had a little better wind behind them and was seen gaining ground but nobody was going very fast. A couple of minutes after midnight *Ratso* finally crossed the finish line with *Flight Risk* a couple of miles and an hour and a half behind. Making steady progress *Finnair* crossed at 0339. Bill Tucker and Blair Arden were halfway back from Buffalo and working hard to make the Awards Banquet. Meanwhile Allan Belovarac and Tom Hughes were still working towards Buffalo in a battle of Catalina 34s.

The awards banquet was great and thanks to the Erie YC staff for their flexibility and great food. With 2 doggie boxes of leftovers in the fridge, we watched the Wednesday night EYC racers drift around Presque Isle Bay in little wind. Allan Belovarac found more breeze on Lake Erie crossing the line at 2300 while some of us were enjoying a late round in the bar. With leftover banquet and class flag in hand I awarded Allan first in the Michigan Class. Someone made a joke to me about "why the food" and I said just watch. It went down like he hadn't eaten in 48 hours with a chaser.

Now, just one more boat on the course. Tom Hughes on *Split Decision* still had 20 miles to go but looked to have some decent speed with a night breeze. After a few hours of sleep, more than Tom had, I woke up and checked the tracking to see him circling around the finish in the dark. It was just daylight and he was headed in. Erie, describes the harbor entrance at night and Tom had sailed very close to the finish without crossing the line in the dark. The sheer determination to finish after nearly 118 hours earned Tom a second in division and yes, his leftover banquet dinner for breakfast which he devoured.

Editor's Note:

Ken was the Race Director for the 2012 Solo Mac and will do it again in 2013 He is on the GLSS Board. He sails Kismet a Nonsuch 30. He has completed 8 Solo Macs all from Chicago and one Super Mac and Back. This year Ken became an expert on things "SPOT".

Did you SPOT your SOLO sailor this year?

By Ken Verhaeren

After the problems with tracking the 2011 Solo Mac Challenge, organizers of the 2012 Challenge decided to look into different tracking systems. One of the main factors in tracking our event was the cost. We discussed the idea of tracking all of our events was brought up. That possibly would reduce the cost and increase our exposure to new sailors. We wanted a device that could be used in multiple Challenges; the SPOT II was the logical choice. However, at the time the cost for the unit and yearlong tracking was \$300.00 per participant. For the 40+ expected entrants in this year's Mac Challenges, that amounted to close to \$12,000. The cost did not include the software needed to put it all together on the web.

Thinking that this was beyond the means of the GLSS, we approached some anonymous donors who generously offered to purchase the SPOT II's and offer them to the Solo Mac Challenge entrants at a huge discount. As we progressed toward the starting date, we were able to purchase the SPOT's at a reduced price and also get a reduction on the yearly subscription rate. The end result was that those Solo Mac entrants whose choose to purchase a SPOT were able to get a SPOT II with a full year of tracking for only \$95.00.

The SPOT II's were delivered later that we had hoped, so all units were activated by their owners from their home computers without the units in their hands based on emails from the Race Director. After activation, an online form was filled out that linked the device to the tracking service, TRACKLEADERS, so that all boats could be seen on their respective lakes. The producers of SPOT recommended TRACKLEADERS for the software needed to combine all of the signals into one comprehensive nautical chart.

Although a few people had difficulty setting up their units, most people had no problems getting their units ready. All the SPOT II's were passed out at the skippers

meetings and turned on prior to the start of the Mac Challenges. Although there were a couple of problems, the Challenges started with all but a couple of units working. TRACKLEADER then worked with the Race Director to get those units on line. The problems that prevented the units from working occurred in the activation of the unit or in the sharing of the SPOT II's SHARED PAGE.

Of the 33 participants in this year's Solo Mac all but three either purchased or used their own SPOT II's. The tracks of the yachts in the Challenges can be seen at <http://trackleaders.com/solomac> This archived site will allow you to replay the Challenges You will find a button below the map ("Show All Boat Tracks") that will allow you the see all of the tracks of the participants. You can also focus in on a boat such my boat, KISMET <http://trackleaders.com/solomaci.php?name=KISMET> This page contains all sorts of information including a picture of the boat (if submitted by the skipper), skipper information and detailed information on the race.

KISMET



Skipper: Ken Verhaeren
 Experience: Veteran
 Boat Design: NONSUCH 30
 Challenge: Chicago
 Division: Erie

The chart associated with this link includes KISMET's trip back to Chicago. This page also shows the various bits of information viewers of the Solo Macs can see as they follow us up the lakes.

KISMET	Status
Race Status	Finished
Last Update Rec'd	01:26:02 PM (CDT) 07/02/12
Current speed	0.0 nts
SPOT Distance covered	678.82 nm
Moving Time	6:09:40
Stopped Time	2:16:45
Moving Average Speed	5.7 nts

There is also a Cheer/Discuss this Boat on Facebook link that those following the Challenge can make comments as the sailors work their way up the lake.

The question we all asked was, "How will this work for both the skippers and those at home viewing the Challenge." From discussions after the Mac and questionnaires sent out after the Challenges were over, the SPOT IIs worked very well! The one person on Lake Michigan who could not get his SPOT II working despite the help of TRACKLEADERS felt that the webpage was great for the other entrants and family. His SPOT is currently working fine and has been used for the Lake Michigan Solo Scramble.

Cole Butterworth, our entrant from Australia, reported that his family and friends were glued to our website. Imagine, people in Australia were watching us live on the internet. Were their some dissenting views? Of course, some people had concerns that this type of exposure could create a problem for us in the future and of the additional cost. Some were concerned about the additional cost. Since the SPOT will be required equipment for the 2013 Solo Mac, that is a legitimate concern. That is one of the reasons we were so grateful for the help of our donors. It certainly reduced the cost and all of those who reenter next year will already have their SPOT's and only need to renew their tracking service. The vast majority of those who responded to our survey reported that friends and family members really enjoyed the site. My wife liked the little icons marking our positions. She felt it easily showed how fast or slow (mostly slow) I was going. TRACKLEADERS reported that we had over 9,000 per day (36,000 by Tuesday afternoon) of the event. They were very surprised that 30 boats (3 boats did not use SPOT IIs) could generate that many hits. And as we found out by Cole Butterworths entry, the web is a source of possible new members.

Tracking the GLSS Events
Paul Nickerson, GLSS President

For the last couple of years we have been lucky enough to have tracking for some of the GLSS Challenges but it has not always been a complete success. Some of the large major races like the Lake Ontario 300 have been able to offer it through commercial sponsorship at no direct cost to the participants. With others it has been a large part of the participation fee. Our Mac tracking has been made available through some anonymous donations several years. All of these come with a high price tag and trackers are only available during the

challenge, get them at the start and turn them in at the finish.

With the advent of the SPOT and possibly other systems in the future, there are now several companies that offer tracking through reading the positions on your SPOT account and putting them on a chart or Earth satellite program. Your Board and Race Chairs were able to get tracking for the Macs, Superior 600, and Lake Erie challenges in part again to some generous donations and also asking participants to cover some of the costs. I know there is lots of debate as to the value of all this but let's start with the fact that our tracking sites saw 9000 hits a day.

The tracking sites are not perfect and are still developing. Believe it or not sailing is a small part of the tracking market. There are few events in sailing like ours. Having numerous SPOTs in our fleet also allows us to track some of the smaller events like the Michigan Scramble and Lower Huron which are big events for other clubs.

From the race organization standpoint it helps being able to track boats not only during the Challenge but also boats coming to and going home from the challenge. During the Lake Erie Challenge I was able to check the tracking through my computer with a wireless connection when close to shore within cell range. This helped as we had several boats that did not get their SPOTs activated until right before the challenge and I was still emailing information after the start. All boats were in the system an hour after the start.

This year we saw some problems with the tracking but most of them were actually human error. Some people forgot to reset the SPOT after 24 hours or in my case I found mine upside down 8 hours later under some other gear that went flying in the cabin when the winds piped up on Lake Huron. There's also a learning curve for viewers as to where to find information that may not be readily apparent.

Remember with the SPOT that you can use it year round on your own tracking account and share it with friends and there are safety aspects to it. We'll continue to work with the tracking to improve our services at a reasonable cost and as always we want your input and knowledge as this is a continuous learning experience.

GLSS Web Update

Bill Tucker, GLSS Corresponding Secretary

We are slowly working to update the GLSS web. In general we are trying to simplify the web so it will be easier to keep up to date and so it will be easier for you to use. Urgent news and changes will be highlighted with quick links on the front page. The graphics in the header has been given a fresh new look. The links page, trophies page and the contact page have all recently been updated. We also hope to add a page for people who are just getting into solo sailing with some of the basics that we typically discuss at our Safety Seminars. It is also planned to add tables listing historical participation in GLSS events as was included in the past year books. These tables will be included in the Members only section. If you see things that need updating or would have other suggestions please send me and e-mail: btucker@alum.calberkeley.org.

A great big Thank you

THANK YOU!

to the anonymous donors who paid for race tracking the last two years and helped us racers purchase SPOTs for the races this summer.

Want to contact contributors or board members?

Phone numbers and e-mail addresses for Board Members and contributors can be found in the member's only section of the GLSS web site. Also Board Members, Race Chairs, etc. can be contacted through the "Contact Us " button on the left side of the GLSS home page.

www.solosailors.org