

Ray Maki Series Race Four

The lure of a Brighton - Queenscliff Race cost the QLYC fleet Sundance and Kinsale. The weather - rain had fallen during the night and continued after dawn - was not predicted to be the sunny skies and calm seas we elderly sailormen (and women) prefer.

Chinon (so far leader in the series and still in front) was there, as was the indispensable crew of Swan Rescue - Ian and Bev. Lee (today assisted by Jennifer Gilbert).

Presently the captain and crew of Tiercel arrived: with Tintagel, this made a fleet of three and the club captain (Ian Curtis) began his briefing.

This race was to be sailed as a sternchaser as a practice for the real sternchaser that is approaching from the future. In a sternchaser, the duration of the race is fixed: in this case two hours. The slowest boat starts first and the faster ones start after delays calculated by their club handicaps.

Theoretically, all competitors collide at the end of the race. In practice, after two hours the club handicapper sees the error of his/her ways, and the winner is the vessel in the lead.

Since Rosie our scratch boat was absent, the assembly indulged itself with a bit of mental calculus before deciding that the simplest solution was to imagine Rosie was there and starting at 1-30 PM.

During briefing, the gentle northerly breeze was replaced by one less gentle from the south.

Spying a heavy grey cloud approaching, the crew of Tintagel dropped the idea of working sails and opted instead for a large hanky and a tea towel. So rigged, the aged vessel and its even older crew motored to the start.

Course: start at Grassbeds, then Swan Spit, then QA, and back to Grassbeds *ad infinitum*, all to starboard until 3-30 PM.

After the imaginary Rosie got off promptly at 1-30 PM, Tintagel made a mess of her start and didn't get away until a bit later than 1-41-30 PM. At this time the heavy grey cloud moved from Queenscliff to directly over the race area hiding the other competitors and Swan Rescue from Tintagel's view.

At 1-53-00 PM and 1-55-00 PM Tiercel (Colin Gibb and Mark Howard) and Chinon (heavyweight crew of Claire Ingham, Steve Lee, Alan Russell, and John) invisible to Tintagel, presumably began the pursuit. But actually, Chinon had her jib wound around the forestay at the critical time and started five minutes late.

By this time Tintagel was tacking back down the course to QA and Grassbeds. Still in front at Grassbeds, Tintagel frequently exceeded seven knots on the return to Swan Spit. The second return to QA and Grassbeds was difficult. The strong breeze against the last of the ebb set up one metre seas one metre apart. Captain and crew were soon very well washed, and the vessel was frequently brought to a complete halt. Chinon (reefed main, No. 3 headsail) found herself overpowered in the heavier gusts, but with three on the rail was able to drive through the seas.

After the third return to Swan Spit, all the vessels opted for the Swan Island shore. About QA, Tintagel was passed by Tiercel and Chinon, but the latter was unable to catch Tiercel before the race finished.

Kinsale and Sundance? Kinsale blew up her headsail furling gear but finished: Sundance was race leader but tore two sails, retired, and reached Queenscliff about 5-00 PM.

Steve Lee's summing up, "A memorable day, for all the wrong reasons."