



## FASTNET

We reached the Needles at about 23.30hrs by which time the wind had freshened and had come round to the east. After four hours of the race we at last started to make good headway. The wind continued to freshen getting up to between 15 and 20 knots. We were now tramping along with the kite up and got to Portland Bill by 05.20hrs on Sunday.

The Fastnet race this year was scheduled to start later than in previous years at 1930hrs. As we milled around the start area waiting for our gun it was too late to reflect on how little preparation we had had as a crew leading up to the race.

Through a combination of circumstances this was the first time that we had all got together and for some of us our failure to complete the qualification races leading up to the Fastnet had reduced our race practice.

Whilst I do not think that this did impact significantly on our overall position, we had not developed as a team and we carry this lesson forward to 2001.

Very light winds had prevented our's and the majority of the fleet's completion of the Cervantes Trophy race (to St Peter Port) over the early May bank holiday weekend. We had a good Morgan Cup race to Dartmouth over the Whitsun bank holiday weekend but failed to make the start line for the race to St Malo due to a broken engine output shaft.

So it was then that our experience of previous Fastnet and other offshore races was to gain us race entry but without the race practice and the team building that we had managed in 1997.

At 19.30hrs the gun marked the start of this year's race for us.

The forecast was for E/NE winds about Force 3 promising a nice spinnaker run up the Solent

Once clear of Lands End the wind started to back and drop off. We were forced to keep bearing away in order to keep the kite filled - essentially using it as a light genoa with the pole dropped down at the luff and sheeted hard in. We continued to drop down on our track all this time although not by a great deal at first; but as the wind freshened we had to bear away even more. By 04.00hrs on Monday morning we decided to drop the kite and make up again on our track with the #1.

Daybreak on Monday saw a freshening wind from the North and the seas started to mount. For the rest of the morning and into the early afternoon we saw strong northerly winds - Force 6, occasionally gusting Force 7

and out into the Channel. However, this was not to be; by 19.30hrs the wind had all but died. Such wind as there was was coming from the SW but it was less than 5 knots. The stronger tide in the central area of the Solent is on the Island side but we decided to go for the slightly stronger wind which was further out in the main channel.

As we crossed the line we were close hauled holding ground to the boats further inshore. It was a lovely summer evening with a bright sun setting low on the horizon; the evening was warm as we sailed into the sunset.

The sea was flat and we made slow progress - gently drifting down towards Hurst. By 21.30hrs the wind had started to veer to the North (en route to the forecast NE?) but it was still light. We got to Yarmouth by about 10.00pm - alternating between the kite and #1 headsail as the wind made up its mind what it wanted to do. As we approached Hurst we were still holding ground with the boats that had started further inshore but with the light winds we ended up on the Shingles side of the Needles Channel and this was to prove a poor position to have got ourselves into.

With the wind having backed again we ended up close hauled trying to creep slowly away from the Shingles Bank and into the main stream. As we did so we passed the Italian Adecco Maxi being towed off the Bank by the Yarmouth life boat. Most of the fleet by now was making good ground on our position and we lost out considerably.

across the deck. We ended up that day with two reefs and a heavy jib before the wind eased off at 18.00hrs to Force 3 or 4 when we were able to get back to full main and the light #1. The wind remained N throughout and we made good progress across the Irish Sea towards the Fastnet Rock - maintaining a speed over the ground of between 6 and 8 knots for most of the day.

Our rate of progress thus far across the Irish Sea was giving us an ETA at the Rock of around 05.00hrs on Tuesday morning. Alas, the good wind that we had been experiencing throughout Monday was not to last. At about 04.00hrs on Tuesday morning the wind died and we were essentially "parked" with the

By this time we had developed a nasty wrap in the spinnaker which took some while to unravel; with all the sail changing and gybing we had done through the night we had ended up with some crossed halyards at the top of the mast. The safer strategy was to await daybreak before we attempted to re-hoist so we continued with the #1 headsail for another couple of hours. By the time we got the halyards sorted out and re-hoisted the kite the wind had dropped off considerably and had become variable in direction.

Around 07.30hrs the wind started to fill in from the south and we once again were able to make good speed across Lyme Bay - close reaching with the kite up. The wind stayed with us all day and by lunch time on Sunday we were south of Start Point making a course of 260° in a good southerly Force 4 wind.

By mid afternoon the wind had veered towards the SW and we were no longer able to hold the kite; but even with the #1 we continued to make good speed of 6 to 7 knots. We reached the Lizard at about 22.30hrs on Sunday having had a good run since leaving the Needles 24 hours or so earlier.

We continued to make good progress across Mounts Bay with the #1 but as we rounded on Lands End the wind veered and dropped off. We were able to get the kite up by about 01.00hrs on Monday morning. The wind continued to veer and settled at a N/NE Force 2/3. We passed Lands End at 02.30hrs in the morning under a bright starlit sky.

Fastnet Rock only 8 miles away. We ghosted along on the tide and the little wind that there was, finally rounding the Rock at about 09.00hrs on Tuesday.

Having rounded the outbound/inbound separation buoy five miles or so south of the Fastnet we set off for Bishop Rock on the Isles of Scilly - the next mark on the course. The wind by now had set in from the south so we were close hauled on an eastward track - hoping that the wind would veer a touch to free us up for our course of 135°. We were sailing along well with full main and the #1. The wind did veer a little as we hoped and we made good progress on our track. It then backed again - forcing us down on our track -

but at least we were moving. At about 07.00hrs on Wednesday the wind started to die; initially it veered and allowed us to make our way south but by 09.00hrs we had rain and very light and variable winds.

The approach of the eclipse was doomed as a spectacle with low grey cloud already making for a somewhat darkened seascape. We were in an ideal position more or less on the centre line of the path of the eclipse to the NW of the Scilly Isles but the weather turned out to be a great disappointment. As the eclipse approached the sky duly went dark but unfortunately for us there was nothing more spectacular. Moreover, we were getting

### CSD Cruising & Training Programme.

Nov		
Nov	NV1	01 to 07 * Training, Seetime or Charter
Nov	NV2	08 to 12 YM / CS Refresher
Nov	NV3	13 to 15 RYA Assessments for C of Cs.
Nov	NV4	15 to 19 * Training, Seetime or Charter
Nov	NV5	20 to 21 Seetime weekend
Nov	NV6	22 to 23 * Training, Seetime or Charter
Dec		
Dec	DC1	01 to 31 * Training, Seetime or Charter

\* Depends on Customer demand

### CHARGES

£695 per week or  
£99 per day

All non-members joining CSD charters are required to pay Temporary Membership fee of £4 per day.

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## STOP PRESS

The AGM of Channel Sailing Division will be held at THE GAFF RIGGER Mercury Yacht Harbour at 12 noon on 29 January 2000

extremely wet and not making a lot of progress.

It was not until about 13.00hrs on Wednesday that the wind filled in once more and we started to make good progress. We had a good Force 4 breeze setting in from about the S/SE. We rounded Bishop Rock at 20.30hrs that Wednesday and set off on course for the Lizard in what was by then a southerly Force 4 wind. Unfortunately this was not to last and by 22.00hrs the wind had started to ease and by the early hours of Thursday morning it backed to the east forcing us in to Mounts Bay. We were by now seeing a northerly tidal stream swirling around the Scilly Isles, Wolf Rock and Lands End making our track over the ground even worse. We tacked for an hour or two before the wind backed further and settled down around E/NE. We finally got onto the making tack with a light breeze of about 5 knots. We short tacked up to and around Lizard Point - finally rounding the Lizard at about 08.30hrs on Thursday morning.

The wind continued to be light and easterly in direction all morning making for a slow trek across to Plymouth. We also had to contend with a foul tide. Should we have stayed south after rounding Bishop's Rock? Should we have

John Young



Back - left to right  
Roy Stillman, John Young (Skipper), Mark Dyer, Chris Stebbings, Christine Fernie

Front - left to right  
Robin Miller, Giles Ridout, Andy Fernie

### VALKYRIE SAILING PROGRAMME 1999

RACING			TRAINING/CHARTERS/CRUISING		
Date	Event	Berth Fee (£)	Date	Event	Berth/Charter(C) Fee (£)
<b>October</b>			<b>October</b>		
9-10	Hamble Winter Series 1	68		)	100(C)/day
16-17	Hamble Winter Series 2	68		) Available for	
23-24	Hamble Winter Series 3	68		) mid week Charter	
30-31	Hamble Winter Series 4	68		)	
<b>November</b>			<b>November</b>		
6-7	Hamble Winter Series 5	68		)	100(C)/day
13-14	Hamble Winter Series 6	68		) Available for	
20-21	Hamble Winter Series 7	68		) mid week Charter	
27-28	Hamble Winter Series 8	68		)	

\* Representative event

gone well into the bay having decided to go inshore at the Lizard? The endless questions - tactics!

We crossed the finish line on Plymouth breakwater at 18.51hrs on Thursday. We logged 646 miles. Our position overall was 107<sup>th</sup> out of 195 starters (excluding the Adecco Maxis and the multi hulls - a significant improvement on 1997). We were 19<sup>th</sup> out of 35 in Class 2A and 40<sup>th</sup> out of 60 overall in Class 2 which was about the same as 1997.

Overall, it was an enjoyable race. The conditions were fairly kind; we had one day with a good blow, winds were Force 3/4 for most of the time although we had a couple of spells of very light and frustrating winds, but on balance the conditions were not too bad and made for a fairly easy sail.

The watch system worked well, the food was very good and for once the long range forecast we had before the start proved to be fairly consistent with the daily shipping forecasts we took. Apart from the lessons learnt about race preparation and team building mentioned above there were various other lessons learnt which we must now carry forward to our Fastnet campaign in 2001.