



The GLSS Solo Challenger Fall 2014

*The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society
Fall 2014 – Mark Mahowald (glsswebmaster@gmail.com)
editor*

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This edition of the Solo Challenger has a letter from our President, and race reports from the Solo Chicago Mac challenge, the St Clair Solo and the Lake Ontario 600. We hope everyone has had a great fall and the boats have been tucked in for the winter ahead.

From the Helm

Ken Verhaeren GLSS President

Yes, another summer has sped by and we all have either pulled our boats or in the process of doing so. It seems that every year at this time someone asks, “how did your sailing go this summer?” Well, it went very well thank you! Answering for the GLSS, it was an exceptional summer. This year we ran the MAC, SUPER MAC and the SUPER MAC & BACK (for the third time) and enjoyed a much larger participation than in recent years. Joey Baker (Pt Huron) and Brian Parkinson (Chicago) joined the list of sailors completing our longest challenge. The Lake Erie Challenge also experienced more sailors than normal and had an interesting sail to say the least.

On Lake Ontario the Solo 300 was sailed again, but some very enthusiastic sailors continued for a second time around to complete the first GLSS Lake Ontario 600. Brent Hughes did the GLSS proud by not only beating all the other solo sailors, he also beat ALL of the crewed boats.

The summer also gave us a smorgasbord of weather, no wind to storm warning, clear beautiful skies to fog so dense that seeing the bow was difficult and then those wonderful days with the wind on the beam and 1 ft. waves. Throughout the summer we were able to track all of our events, from the largest Challenges to the smallest scrambles. On Lake Michigan we watched boats sailing from each side of the lake on a collision course to the Mid Lake Buoy and then merge as they headed down the lake to Michigan City. Next year we will continue using Kattack and our SPOT trackers to follow our sailors.

But with Kismet now on the hard, my thoughts move toward all of the unknown volunteers that made our sailing season so successful. Without these friends working behind the scenes we could not have run our events nor enjoyed gathering together at the finish line. The Challenge Directors, score keepers, finish line crews and those wonderful people who met us at the docks when we were so tired. I can not say Thank You enough. I’m also looking forward to seeing my friends this winter, first in Toronto as the GLSS takes part in the Toronto Boat Show for the first time and then in Chicago at the new and revised Strictly Sail Show that has merged with the Boat & RV Show. The AGM will be on January 17th as the boat show will be earlier this year. We are looking for a big crowd so start making your plans. That also means sending in your dues payment for 2015 so that you can vote during the business meeting.

This has truly been a great summer and we have many new members to celebrate with.
Sailing together Solo
Ken

St. Clair Solo and Big Al's Steak Roast



With poor wind conditions predicted, the sailors venturing to Lake St. Clair for this year's St. Clair Solo were crossing their fingers, hoping for just a little more air than the weather man forecasted.

Sailors traveled from near and far, several boats came from Lake Erie, as far as Erie PA, Mentor, OH, and Vermillion, OH. Due to a change in the local race schedule, several boats that normally would be busy with the North Channel Race, decided to check out the event.

Friday evening came, the skippers gathered on the patio at Great Lakes Yacht Club for hamburgers and hotdogs hot off the barbeque. The skippers meeting covered all the necessary safety and course instructions. But, the topic of shortening the event had to be discussed, and a lively discussion followed. As singlehanded sailors, patience and perseverance are necessary and often required attributes.

Saturday morning came, wind predictions had not improved. Starting out of the North at 5, slowly moving to the east and dropping in velocity midafternoon. The decision was made to shorten the course for PHRF B and C boats, letting the PHRF A boats run the full 39 mile course. The JAM, PHRF B and C boats would run the 19 mile Short Course.

Boats sailing the Short Course, had a beautiful sunny 75 degree day, and very nice sailing conditions. The wind held at about 6 knots for most of the circuit. All boats finished midafternoon, as the wind began to shift and subside.

Meanwhile the PHRF A boats were beginning to round the Thames River Mark on the far side of the lake. Struggling to get around the mark and leave it behind, they hung in there and worked patiently across the lake towards the final turning mark and headed down the final 7 mile leg in the late evening.

Congrats is deserved by all who persevered and logged their finishes nearing Mid Night.

For the second year in a row, all boats finished the race! Jeff Golding and his crew served Big Al's Steak Roast about 7 pm to the short course skippers and the volunteers from GLYC that helped pull off the event. Yes, the PHRF A boats did get to enjoy their steaks at about 1 am.

In all 25 sailors competed the circuit, and over 30 dinners were served.

The St. Clair Solo, the final GLSS event of the season, is more than just a day on the water. It's a weekend of comradery, sailing, food, and determination. Hope to see you next year.

Thanks to the Great Lakes Yacht Club staff and membership for their continued support of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society and its events.

My First Solo Mac

Some thoughts on the 2014 Chicago – Mac Solo from a first timer.

By John Mahowald

How I missed my first solo Mac.

My first solo Mac was foggy, cold, and long. One knew something was up when the weather expert wouldn't give a wind forecast. Nothing about direction or strength. Just that it would be light, and there weren't any wind makers during the next few days.

The race started in fog. The only way to find the line was to trust your instruments. We got off, and after a bit, up went the spinnakers on a reach. We moved for awhile, but then the fog came back. You were left sailing in our own little world. Not even much sun to speak of. Once or twice, a boat might silently glide into your world, and then just as quickly, disappear, leaving you alone again. No lake to see, no sky, no sun, just fog. At one point during the second day, I heard a boat tack. You could hear the whir of the winch as the sail was brought over to the other side. But I never saw the boat.

Then there was the cold. The water temperature at the mid lake buoy was 39 - in the middle of June! Tee shirt, long underwear, heavy flannel shirt, sweatshirt, windbreaker, foul weather jacket - it didn't matter. You were still cold. Maybe I'm just sick and feverish, I thought.

And the fog actually became a cloud, a cloud full of water. Water was condensing on everything. Running down the backstay. On every surface. The telltales were glued to the sails and were useless. And my great running light upgrade became a curse. I previously had dim lights mounted on the deck - old style running lights. I replaced them with bright LED lights mounted higher up off the deck. So now

instead of running in the fog with my 'low beams', I was running with my 'high beams' on. I couldn't see a thing, except my brand new, bright LEDs bouncing off the fog. Well, that worked out well, I thought to myself.

And then there were the freighters. They just kept coming. You couldn't see them, only hear them - their deep, loud horns. AIS was saving me the whole race. A group of us got a lecture from one captain about how we needed to be monitoring channel 16. We were monitoring our race channel, and not 16 at all. He was trying to hail the group of boats he was about to charge through. Like a bowling ball rolling down the lane toward a group of pins. His 'advise' was duly noted.

The fog finally lifted after several days, but by then we were in the north part of the lake. I never got to see anything. It felt like I missed a great deal of the race. The wind finally came also, after enduring so much 'light and variable.' And it was variable. The wind changed direction significantly every 10-20 minutes. How many times did the genoa suddenly backwind? I lost count.

So my reward was a heavy air beat at night through Grays Reef. Wonderful. Thank goodness for the new skippers briefing the night before the race. It came with a wonderful packet and lots of good advise. And in this case the advise about how to get through Grays Reef in bad weather. That knowledge became critical.

Sleep, or the lack thereof. I learned that after a few days, I could not just take a break and sit still for a few minutes. I would fall asleep very quickly. And I learned you don't want to fall asleep accidentally at that point with no alarm set. I blame the following on my lack of sleep. On Wednesday morning, after beating down the channel to the bridge, in rain and heavy wind, I was on my way to the finish line. I had passed under the bridge. I need to make one last tack north before I could head for the line. But there were two freighters there. One was coming from the finish line and going toward the bridge. The other was coming from the bridge and going toward the finish line. They proceeded slowly as they got themselves lined up to pass each other safely and be on their way. When the freighter in front of me (going toward the bridge) cleared out, I tacked. I was clear of him, I could tack now, right? It wasn't long before I heard three short, deep toots of the horn - from the freighter behind me. The one going to the same finish line I was. I'm sure the freighter was wondering why the heck I would tack in front of him. Was he invisible?! Toot, toot, toot. Hello, do you not see me! Coming through!

Crap! I'm tired. I thought I was done tacking. But when you are about to get run over, you find the strength to tack back and get the heck out of the way.

Want to see a more powerful Solo Challenger newsletter?

We are looking for some volunteers from each lake to help work on the Solo Challenger and make it a more regular and vibrant newsletter. We could use help from people who want to help organize and solicit content for the newsletter as well as anyone who enjoys the design side of putting a newsletter together.

If you have any interest in learning more, please email glsswebmaster@gmail.com and let us know.

If you have a story for the Winter newsletter or any other content ideas, please let us know that as well.

The Annual Meeting is set for January 17, 2015 in Chicago

Mark your calendars as the annual meeting is set for January 19th in Chicago. This will be a great event and a good opportunity to swap stories with your fellow members. Details will be coming out in December, but save the date! We look forward to a great turnout this year.

Congrats to the GLSS Class of 2015

Congratulations to this seasons new members, completing their first GLSS membership granting challenge.

Lake Huron: John Walton Jr.(President's Trophy Winner)

Lake Michigan: Charles Calkins
John Mahowald(President's Trophy Winner)

Lake Ontario: Martin 'Mac' McKenzie
Jim French

Lake Erie: Rob Burger(President's Trophy Winner)
Aaron Ackerman

Lake Ontario 600 Wrap Up
By Brent Hughes
Pearl – CAN13775
FBYC , GLSS

During the winter season of 2013/2014, the Lake Ontario Offshore Racing (LOOR) Group was looking at different ways to celebrate the 25 year history of the Lake Ontario 300 Race. What started in 1990 as a Double Handed Race created by Solo sailors, has had a number of evolutions over the years. There have been different crew options, different course scenarios and routes, and different start and finish points as well. In addition, the shorter, “Scotch Bonnet Island “ Course was added a number of years ago, to allow white sail yachts, as well as higher rated (over 183) PHRF yachts to participate in this great race of ours. There have been high points and low points, but over the last 10 years, we can honestly say that the Lake Ontario 300 Race has been a fantastic race; perhaps the best run event on the Great Lakes. So how do we make it even better in 2014?

We thought a great deal about the other races on the Great Lakes, and focused in on the Bayview and Chicago Mackinac Races, as these certainly have the history and the swagger of being great races that need to be on everybody’s “bucket list”. The Chicago Mackinac Race has run for 106 years, and the Bayview Mackinac (or the Baby Mac as it’s referred to by Chicagoans) has run for 90 years. As most know, these races are a “one way sprint up Lake Michigan and Lake Huron to Mackinac Island. What made them such a draw to sailors for so long is the destination....Mackinac Island is beautiful, and a step back in time to a different era.

Every two years, each of the races offers what is known as a “Super Mac”, whereby the finish line at Mackinac is simply a turning mark, and the yachts continue on southbound down the next lake – Chicago to Mackinac to Port Huron, or in reverse, from Port Huron to Mackinac to Chicago. This effectively turns a 250nm or 280nm race into a 530 nm race. The participation numbers are lower of course, but those who have completed one have a real sense of accomplishment that they have achieved something great.

In addition, the Great Lakes Single Handed Society (GLSS) offers even more for the “solo” sailor; every June they run a “Solo Mac”, from both Chicago and Port Huron up to the island, and every two years they offer a “Solo Super Mac”. However, on every third year, the GLSS runs what is known as the “Solo Super Mac and Back”, a 1,060 nm Challenge....solo. Really an incredible achievement if one can accomplish it, and certainly the longest freshwater race in the world, even if only held tri-annually.

This brings us back to possibility of a **Lake Ontario 600 Challenge**. When I brought up the idea in November of 2013, I was told that I was crazy. Most people on the committee, led by the the ever-lovable Irish chair Joe Doris, simply said “you are the only idiot who would attempt such a thing”. Perhaps that would be true I argued, but why not throw it out there. Sure we don’t have the cache of a beautiful finish destination

or a chance to sail into one of the other Great Lakes to extend the race (thanks Niagara Falls), but there is nothing stopping us from.....going around again, is there? And so it was born. The Inaugural **Lake Ontario 600 Challenge** was announced publicly for the first time at the 2014 Toronto Boat Show, and true to my word, I signed up "***Pearl***" as the first entrant in the first race. The buzz at the Boat Show was palpable, and it kick-started the push for the 600nm challenge. The idea is as simple as it sounds; yachts would finish their Lake Ontario 300 race by crossing the finish line at PCYC, and then.....sail around the course again. Boats began to sign up at the show, and many others were certainly considering it. We were off to a good start.

By the time the race rolled around on July 12, 2014, there were a total of 126 boats registered for the Lake Ontario 300 Challenge on the Main Duck and Scotch Bonnet Course, and of these, 14 boats (11%) of the fleet, signed up for the **Lake Ontario 600 Challenge**. We focused on the "challenge" aspect of this race, and let all the skippers know that no matter what happens, if they didn't finish the second lap, their scores for the Lake Ontario 300 would still stand. In addition, because there were only 14 boats signed up (4 fully crewed, 4 double handed, and 8 solo), it was agreed that all the boats would sail in one PHRF division, meaning that their Lake Ontario 300 corrected time was added to the second lap to make up the total elapsed and corrected times for the Lake Ontario 600. The stage was set.....

As has been written about by Brian Townsend, the 2014 Lake Ontario 300 event was a real test of people, boats and gear. Lake Ontario gave us a good old fashioned helping of just about everything; lots of wind, storms, rain, a rough rounding of Main Duck, plenty of ships, and even some calms. Who would go on for the second lap?

On board ***Pearl*** I kept a close eye on both my Solo competitors in the 300, as well as the DH and FC competitors for the 600 Challenge. As I wound up the last 30 miles of the first lap, I wondered if I really had it in me to do it again; the first lap had been tough, would any boats go on??? I watched with keen interest and excitement as fully crewed ***Happy Puppy*** (Collins Bay YC) and ***Lively*** (ABYC), sailing in different divisions in the LO300, came through the finish line almost together and kept on sailing, side by side in a match race off towards the Gibraltar mark again. Great news.....it's on! ***Pearl*** (FBYC) was the third boat to cross the finish line at about 2130 hrs and announce intentions to keep sailing, followed closely by ***Rouleur***(RCYC), and ***Upstart*** (BPYC). We definitely had a race now, I was incredibly happy!

Our first leg to Toronto went well; the night breeze was up enough to get us up to the Gibraltar mark and away from the city during the night and off towards Oswego again. The wind had backed to the east, and storms were forecast for the following day, followed by 24 hrs of solid westerlies and big seas. Sure enough, dawn broke grey and bleak, and a number of squall lines pounded the fleet from different directions. ***Pearl*** was nearing the south coast, east of Olcott NY when the first lines hit. There were some heavy winds and a ton of rain, but luckily no lightning. Three of these lines came through in the morning, before the fronts passed through and the heavy westerlies set in about mid day.

The remaining run to the Ford Shoal mark at Oswego was a heavy air downwind ride, as the waves built up and the sun beat down. *Happy Puppy* and *Lively* were still stuck to one another about 20 miles ahead, while *Rouleur*, *Upstart*, and *Pearl* sailed eastward, almost in sight of each other, all the way to Oswego. Following us, *Joeley Rose* (PCYC), *Better Still* (LSYC), and *Double Time* (BPYC) rounded out the eight boats that were still racing in the Lake Ontario 600. The other six yachts had retired from the race at the end of the Lake Ontario 300, or soon afterwards.

Pearl rounded Ford Shoal near midnight, following closely behind *Upstart*, and the two boats sailed onwards to Main Duck Island again in the night and the still building seas. It was clear to see that the second rounding of MDI was going to be rough, again. We rounded the island at dawn, in heavy air, and I reefed *Pearl's* mainsail behind the island. It felt like déjà vu – didn't I just do the same thing a few days ago? We were in for another rough ride. The next 12 hours felt like forever, as we were pounded by heavy seas and strong winds. The forecast was for much less wind than we saw. I'm not sure what the other sailors thought of the second rounding, but in my opinion, it was tougher than the first rounding on the first lap, as the winds and waves stayed up much longer. It was a welcome relief at 1700 hrs when I could finally change up to the #1 and take the final reefs out of the mainsail.

Happy Puppy and *Lively* continued their fantastic race together, while *Rouleur* took an extreme southerly route after the island and was clawing his way up the south shore. *Pearl* and *Upstart* also stayed stuck to one another below Prince Edward County towards the north shore, and then on across the lake towards Niagara through what was to be the final night of the race for us. Meanwhile, the remainder of the fleet, *Joeley Rose*, *Better Still*, and *Double Time* were taking their lumps at the island as well, but all were staying fairly well together and having a great battle amongst themselves.

The final day brought us all lighter winds, flat seas, and fair weather – a very welcome relief. The tacking up the south shore towards Niagara brought its fair share of challenges to the fleet, as we struggled to find a happy medium between the shore breeze and the gradient that was still coming across the lake from the northwest. In addition, the light air and the current at the Niagara buoy offered challenges for us as well. Luckily we were not too long in getting across the shallow waters of the bar and around the final mark of the race.

On the final leg of the race, a light to medium air tight reach, *Pearl* stretched her legs for the final push to the finish, under a full main, A3 reaching spinnaker, and very loud music. As the race drew to a close and *Pearl* crossed the finish line, I realized that what was originally thought of as a “joke”, had just become reality. The first Lake Ontario 600 Challenge was, and is.....a success!!!

Congratulations to Daniel McKindsey and crew *Happy Puppy*, for getting line honours in this historic first race, and to Murray Gainer and crew on *Lively* for keeping their foot on the gas and really making *Happy Puppy* work hard for it. Congratulations to *Rouleur*,

for finishing solo challenges this year – not only did Geoff Cornish sail these two races, but he also completed a Lake Michigan Solo Mackinac race in June. Congratulations to Bert Barrett on *Upstart* for being the first and only Double Handed boat to finish the Lake Ontario 600. *Upstart* also sailed the Lake Huron Solo Mackinac Race in June.

Congratulations to *Joeley Rose* – Gene Joelson has done more solo challenges on Lake Ontario than all of the other 19 GLSS members, and his tenacity keeps us all moving forward. Congratulations to David Courtney on *Better Still*, who overcame many personal challenges in 2013 to make it to the start and finish line in this inaugural race. And finally, congratulations to Brian Mitchell on *Double Time*, for just making it to the start line after six weeks in the shop following a collision on June 1st. *Double Time* not only made the start, but hung in for the duration of the race in the smallest boat in the fleet, and closed off this great adventure for the 8 yachts that completed the 2014 Lake Ontario 600 Challenge. Congratulations to all finishers.

Please join us again in 2016, for the second running of the Lake Ontario 600 Challenge.

Overall Results

1. Pearl	Brent Hughes	Solo	FBYC
2. Lively	Murray Gainer		Fully Crewed ABYC
3. Happy Puppy	Daniel McKindsey	Fully Crewed	Collins Bay YC
4. Joeley Rose	Gene Joelson	Solo	PCYC
5. Better Still	David Courtney	Solo	LSYC
6. Upstart	Bert Barrett	Double Hand	BPYC
7. Double Time	Brian Mitchell	Solo	BPYC
8. Rouleur	Geoff Cornish	Solo	RCYC