



The
**SOLO
 CHALLENGER**

*The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes
 Singlehanded Society
 Fall 2011*

Officers:

President: Paul Nickerson
Vice President: Rick McLaren
Treasurer: Jon Jacobs
Corresponding Secretary/Editor: Bill Tucker
Recording Secretary: Greg Gorny

Directors:

Dan Pavlat
Arch van Meter
Adrian van den Hoven
Eric Thomas

IN THIS ISSUE

	Page
GLSS President's Message	1
Race & Event Schedule	1
My Road to the 2011 Solo Mac Challenge	2
2011 Chicago Solo Mac Story	5
Super Mac & Back	8
2011 Lake Ontario 300 Oceans of Challenges	12
The 2011 Trans-Superior	14
2011 Lake Erie Solo Challenge	15

2012 Solo Challenger Events

- ❖ **January 21** Annual General Membership Meeting - Atheneum Suites Hotel Detroit
- ❖ **June 23** Port Huron to Mackinac Isl. Solo Challenge & Chicago to Mackinac Isl. Solo Challenge
- ❖ **July 21** Lake Ontario 300 Solo Challenge
- ❖ **August 18** Erie Solo Challenge

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

GLSS President's Message

A Monumental Year For The GLSS

2011 was a record setting year for the GLSS as for the first time we had challenges on all 5 of the Great Lakes along with the Super Mac and Super Mac and Back. While it involved some great sailing by some great sailors, 2011 was also a success due to the work of many volunteers. We have now seen 269 sailors earn membership in the GLSS and 1066 individual challenges completed. That's a lot of bronze medallions!

With that said, it's time for everyone to celebrate a great year and make plans to attend the 2012 Annual Meeting in Detroit on January 21. The Atheneum Suites Hotel offers a great venue for both our event and to visit downtown Detroit.



Your help needed & appreciated!
 Send comments, pictures and articles to
 Bill Tucker
btucker@alum.calberkeley.org
 586-469-1431

There will be plenty of unbelievable sailing stories to be heard and hopefully those will get everyone motivated to make plans to participate in a GLSS Challenge or two next summer. Be careful talking with Bill Tucker or he'll have you doing all four. Need advice on the Welland Canal? We've got it!

Don't forget to talk up the GLSS with your friends and at your clubs. There's always room for more singlehanded sailors on the lakes and at the GLSS Challenges.

See you in Detroit!

Paul Nickerson, GLSS President

My road to the 2011 Solo Mac Challenge

By Rick Stage

Editor's Note:

This tells the story of Rick completing his first Mac Solo Challenge with a first place in the Erie class and thus becoming a GLSS member.

I first learned of the Solo Mac when I was provisioning my boat Windchime to prepare for the first serious offshore race I was to lead. It was Thursday night before the start of the 2009 Hook Race, and we were preparing to leave Monroe Harbor in Chicago to head 50 miles north, up to Racine, for the start on Saturday. I had about \$100 in groceries, miscellaneous gear obtained at the last minute, and clothes. It took 6 trips from the car to the tender office, and was going to take forever to load this stuff onto the tender, and then onto my boat. There was a guy hanging out at the office who offered to help me out, I was in no position to say no. On the tender, I started chatting him up. Boats were assembling in Monroe for the start of the 101st Race to Mackinac, so I asked him, "Are you doing the Mac this year?" He just kind of smiled and said "I don't do the crewed Mac; I do it solo with the GLSS." This blew my mind. It takes two or three days to get up to Mackinac. How do you sleep, eat, go to the bathroom etc.? How do you deal with the solitude? What if you get into trouble? Our encounter was too brief, and I was too focused on the task at hand to reply with anything more than "Wow, that sounds crazy". For some reason the idea stuck in my head.

We placed fourth in the Hook that year, and beat an experienced crew to the finish line (our sister ship Blush, another Tartan 30C) by 43 seconds over the nearly 53 hour race. It was a dramatic drag race down to the line, and our spinnaker exploded into bits just 10 seconds before crossing the line as we headed up wind to cross. I guess you can say I was "hooked" on offshore racing from then on. That fall I visited the GLSS website, and made it my goal to do the Solo Mac.

After doing a few more offshore races in 2010, I set out on my qualifier on September 30th. I "slept" on board, at the can, in Monroe over night to get an early start at sunrise. During the night a 35 knot wind storm blew in from the north and swung the boat all over the place. I only slept for about two hours- not a good start. As the light came up before sunrise, I dropped the mooring line and headed out of Monroe Harbor for the Chicago lighthouse, raised the main, unfurled the jib, and set my sights on the Southern Mid Lake Buoy #45007. Rounding that and returning to Chicago would be about 107 Nautical Miles, and be a true test of my skills. There would be an additional test now that the winds were 20 to 25 knots out of the north, and the seas were at five to six feet. I had two reefs in the main and the tiller extension in the lock box, since conditions were overpowering the auto helm. I went out of cell phone range and watched the city disappear behind me. The helm was balanced, needing only periodic adjustment, and I was close hauled heading about 10 degrees off course to the east with the starboard rail buried. Windchime was rolling over and sometimes flying off the top of waves only to crash down into the trough on the back side. I felt completely alone. My only companions were "Tom, Donna, and Paul" from NOAA Weather Radio. They are the synthetic voices that broadcast weather conditions and alerts on the XW bands. They were telling me to expect the weather to stay the same, and there were no hazardous weather conditions expected. This was small comfort since I was now surrounded in all directions, as far as the eye can see, by open sea- and the conditions were just beyond the edge of my comfort zone. GPS had me about 20 miles out, the sun was shining bright and it was 50 degrees. I was warm and dry, except for the spray that would shoot up, catch the wind, and sail across the deck parallel to what was passing for the horizon.

At 1pm, it occurred to me I would be rounding the buoy in the dark. I wanted to see this thing, and now I was

only going to see its light. I was sincerely disappointed. I was also starting to feel really tired. I didn't have to take the helm much, but the effort required to keeping from being flung around the cockpit coupled with sleep deprivation, was starting to take its toll. I also discovered that the simple task of going to the bathroom was an exhausting 5 minute fight. Climbing down the companion way ladder, stripping off gloves, foulies and layers of clothes while hanging on to hand rails as the boat is at a 30 degree heel and shaking like a new can of paint. If the boat hits a bigger wave, the helm goes out of balance and I had to run up there to put her back on course before an accidental tack or gybe.

Around 2:30, as I got within 22 miles of the buoy, I heard a loud "bang," like a gun had just gone off. The fiddle block on the main sheet snapped (breaking strength of 2000 lbs.). This was not serious damage to the boat, but it took what was left of my resolve. I rigged up a new main sheet, connected the auto helm, and turned the boat around. I was not prepared for the emotional state I found myself in- scared. I knew I was more than 30 miles from the nearest person. This is a big change from living in Chicago's densely populated West Loop. Solitude is one of my main reasons for sailing, but now I was tired, scared, and talking to myself. "What the hell am I doing out here?"

As I headed for home, something magical happened. The apparent wind that was blowing at 25 knots was now at a nice 13 knots from the starboard rear quarter. The waves I was launching over, were now giving me a nice push home. The auto helm handled the boat beautifully as I surfed down the front, rolled over, and yawed down the back of these former water mountains. It was peaceful, and I was now surfing up to 10 knots, averaging eight knots. After a few minutes I got my composure and sense of wellbeing back. I leaned against the back of the dog house, ate lunch, took a few cat naps, and was home in four hours to see the sun set over the city and waves crash against the walls of the outer harbor. I failed to round the buoy, and failed to qualify for the Solo Mac, but my passion and desire to complete this race were intact. I gained VALUABLE experience for the future. Next time I would sleep in my bed at home the night before, not push the boat so hard, and upgrade the main sheet system to withstand 5000 lbs. of force.

In January at Strictly Sail Chicago, I went over to the GLSS booth. I met Mark Gannon and Ken Verhaeran. "I'm gonna do the Solo Mac this year," I said to Mark. "That's great," he said as if he has heard that one a thousand times before. "What kind of boat do you have?" "My boat is Windchime, It's a Tartan 30C." "Really? I did five crewed Macs on that boat back in the 80s. It's a great boat." Ken gave me some additional info and told me about the spring safety meeting in March. Mark and Ken were very helpful and gave me their contact info if I needed any help or advice. The safety meeting was held seven weeks later at the Chicago Yacht Club. Walking into a room full of strangers in a social setting is always daunting. These guys were some of the best sailors on the lake, and they all knew each other. They have countless stories to tell, and since they don't see each other very often so there was a lot of catching up to be done. I felt really out of place, but seeing Ken and Mark there, I reintroduced myself. After a few minutes, I fit right in. I met Rick McLaren who introduced me around, and I had a great time sharing stories and drinking a few beers. I had been wavering in my resolve to do the race since my first attempt at qualifying, and it was the same weekend of the Chicago to Waukegan race, but now I was committed. I was really encouraged by the safety briefing. I also learned that an extra \$1500 worth of safety equipment can boost your confidence.

On May 2nd, I set out once again for my old friend, Southern Mid Lake Buoy #45007. I listened to news radio on the way up this time. It was nice to have some more company out there other than Mr. and Mrs. Roboto from NOAA. There was a steady northwest wind, and almost no wave action, but it was cold. The temperature got down to 33 degrees in the cabin that night. I was a little freaked out that when I noticed a constant humming of unknown origin. I wondered if I brought my electric shaver and it was lost in the bilge, but after about an hour or so I found it was coming from the mast. I was making about 4 knots, and there was some kind of resonance from the wind in the rigging creating this loud humming noise. Eventually it went away. There was also a near miss with a lake freighter in the middle of the night. They are usually huge, but not the one I almost hit. I thought he still had to be about a mile away as I was nearing the buoy, but as I started to tack away from him; he lit me up with his search light. It was like the power of God shining down on a bug. He was only a quarter of a mile away. I had lost all depth perception in the darkness. He was only

half the size of a regular laker, and right on top of me. He must have thought I had lost my marbles being out there alone this time of year.

Besides that, the trip was completely uneventful. I rounded the buoy around 2am, and headed for home, napping much of the way. I felt great, but tired.

With Rick and Ken checking up on my application every week or so, I completed all necessary paperwork, bought the rest of the equipment I needed and looked forward to a great race.

Before I knew it June 18th, 2011 had arrived. The race started out slow. There was almost no wind, and it took an excruciating 15 minutes to cross the starting line. I cut off Dirk Kruger on Sea Raider before the start, but he was very cool about it. I headed east and then north, remembering something from our weather briefing. "The wind picks up speed as it heads away from land. Then as it approaches land, it gets jammed up and slows down." Once I was sufficiently offshore, I picked up some speed and found myself near Racine around sunset. I was closer to shore than I wanted to be, and almost all at once, the wind just shut off. I spun in circles for an hour or so, but never stopped fighting to get the boat moving. I decided to head east again, and found more and more wind as I went out towards the center of the lake. About an hour later I crossed the T on a boat coming up from the south on the opposite tack. I passed ahead of him by about 20 seconds. A minute later, the radio cracked "Alright, who is the wise guy that passed right in front of me?" "This is Rick on Windchime. Sorry if I woke you up. Who are you?" It was Paul Schloop on Blue Max. I ended up sailing within 10 miles of him the entire race, but I never saw him again. This is one of the great things about the race, you never really feel alone when you're out there. Checking in every six hours, seeing where everyone is, and chewing the fat a little really helps.

Overnight I found the wind, and after watching Blue Max sail away on the rhumb line, I decided to head north again. I shot north at 6.5 knots, and found myself near Little Sable Point around sunrise. I was close to land, and once again found myself stuck in a windless hole. This would be the last time. I made up my mind to stay offshore and stay in the wind. I decided there was no way I was going into the Manitou Passage. As I skirted the outside of the islands, I could hear Jon Jacobs on Loose Shoes over the radio talking about

being stuck in there with no wind at all. I was feeling great about my decision to stay out of there as I was sliding along at 4 knots. Jon's boat is a lot faster than mine, and now I was passing him as he stood still. I wanted to shoot him a friendly verbal jab, "Hey Jon, are you going to come out here and play sailboat race with us?" I know what an awful feeling it is to be stuck with no wind, so I kept it polite. "Hang in there buddy." Later, this turned out to be another smart decision.

The sailing was not too challenging, but I was beating into the north east wind the whole race. As we came north, it put Mackinac Island directly up wind through the various islands, shoals. I took cat naps, but never actually slept. Loose Shoes came out of purgatory and was about 15 miles behind me and closing as the sun set. As I approached Grey's Reef, a storm rolled in. It was hour 60. I picked up the VHF. "Jon, are you out there?" "Yeah, I'm not too far behind you now. How are you doing Rick?" "Fine, but I was just thinking how lucky I am going through Gray's Reef for the first time, not rested, in the dark and in stormy weather. There's no glory if it's easy the first time." "Yeah, Rick. And you are really lucky because I can see a Laker heading into it from north to south." Wow, he was right, I could see it. The channel is not very wide, I have to tack east near a shoal, then north toward the reef just to get up to the entrance. My depth perception was gone, and I was losing my cool as well. I kept tacking every five minutes, one tack toward a rock, the other tack toward a reef. It started to rain as the wind built to 30 knots. I rolled up the jib and reduced my headway to only 3 knots. The storm only lasted about 15 minutes, but my nerves were shot and I was on the brink of losing it. Then Jon came back on the radio. "Hey Rick, you're running a great race. Wait for that laker to come through, get your feet under you and go for it. It's always like this." That really helped me hearing a calm voice of experience over the radio.

I hailed the freighter who said he would be out in about 15 minutes and would head west. As I entered the 5 mile long channel, I thought I saw another freighter heading west towards me. It took me a few minutes to realize that it was the Mackinac Bridge. What a sight! The morning sailing was calm, and I tacked back and forth towards the bridge. Going under it, I met one of my major sailing goals, but the finish line was still 5 miles away. I had to duck another laker right at the end. Finally, I got one of the best greetings I've ever heard. "Welcome to Mackinac Island."

The Mac Solo Challenge is a fitting name for this race, but it is deceiving. I don't feel like I did anything alone. Amy my wife was very supportive of me taking a week of my vacation time to be away. Theresa, with whom I own Windchime, was so generous to let me have the boat for a week, and she also joined my dad, brother, and friend John to help me bring the boat home. The rest of our racing crew- Nate, Aimee, and Andy, helped me prepare the boat. Ken Verhaeren and Rick McLaren gave me so much support preparing for the race, and Jon Jacobs talked me back off the ledge when I was in a panic and ready to quit. I don't know if I could have done this without every one of them, and that makes the success of meeting this challenge that much sweeter.

2011 Chicago Solo Mac Story

By Noel Brockman

Editor's Note:

Noel has completed two Solo Macs from Port Huron. . This article tells of his experience doing the 2011 Chicago Solo Mac in his new boat "Quick & Dirty". Though Noel and "Quick & Dirty" did not make it to Mackinac Island under sail they did complete the Lake Erie Solo Challenge a couple months later with a 2nd place finish in the Superior class. Luke, his son, did better than his dad with a 1st place finish in Superior Class.

The 'red sky in the morning' truly was a sign of things to come as we were 24 hours into our trip from Mackinac Island to Lake Muskegon after last year's Bayview Port Huron to Mackinaw race. The storm that started around 11 AM continued to pound my son's 33' sailboat Sorceress until we finally took refuge on White Lake around midnight. Wet and exhausted, Lake Michigan humbled us unlike anything that we'd ever experience up to this point.

With Luke living in Grand Rapids, and Sorceress nearby at Lake Muskegon, the plan was pretty straight forward...to sail my new Abbott 33 'Quick & Dirty' from Lake St. Clair up Lake Huron, over to Lake Michigan then down to Lake Muskegon where I'd stay for a couple of days, help Luke launch his boat, then the two of us would sail our boats to Chicago to participate in the

Chicago to Mackinac Solo race put on by the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society (GLSS).

Every year the GLSS has a dual solo Mackinac race, one starting from Port Huron and one from Chicago. About 20 participants from each lake usually take part and have a common awards banquet on Mackinac Island afterwards.

This shake down sail for the Abbott would give me the opportunity to get a feel for the new boat that I reluctantly purchased in the fall to fill the void the my Viking 28 Blue Jay had left after I sold her after 20 years of great sailing together. I also felt I had some unfinished business on Lake Michigan, confident that I would come out on top in the event of a repeat of last year's events.



Looking forward to racing against Luke again, my brother Tom and I left Belle River on the 3rd of June, arriving at the dock only to realize I forgot my keys for the boat. Debbie was back in no time with them, we left with good winds and in two hours were at the mouth of the St. Clair river.

A typical motor up to the Port Huron Yacht club was uneventful and we tied to our favorite spot and enjoyed the hospitality of the club that has always welcomes our stay, as we've been going up there to race ever since Joe Davidson showed us the way 10 or 15 years ago. Even Joe's buddy 'Brock' was glad to see us!

We provisioned up the next morning and headed north into Lake Huron with light winds and very cool water temperatures. With 10 days to get to Lake Muskegon to meet Luke, we had built in extra days to stop along the way to allow for poor weather. Our first night at Harbor Beach wasn't exactly as planned since we ran aground about six times trying to get to the marina, not

quite enough water for the Abbott. A good test of the anchor, which we set at midnight next to a coal plant, it did the job and we enjoyed a free night's stay.



The trip from Harbor Beach to Presque Isle took about 26 hours with light air, but we sailed most of the way and Tom got a taste of solo sailing which he decided he didn't like all that much. Great stars were out and when the sun rose, the winds picked up a bit and gave us a nice spinnaker sail the last 15 miles to Presque Isle.

We docked just before lunch and stayed for three days, the last because of viscous storms that ripped through there but it was the first time that either of us could remember relaxing so much at such a quiet place. The marina was virtually empty and out in the middle of nowhere, very quiet place diametrically opposite to what you'd see on Mackinaw Island. A restaurant nearby only opened in the evening and a general store across the street that provides bikes for free to explore the area. Great place to stop and visit.

Finally set out on for Mackinac Island with decent winds and arrived on the island about 12 hours later. After the peace and quiet of Presque Isle, the busyness of the island was a bit hard to take. Even though it was probably quiet there by their standards, we were quick to leave the next morning.

Small craft advisories were issued for the area as we left Mackinac Island with east winds 20 to 25 knots, the Abbott sailed very well under a main only heading straight to Grays Reef hitting 10.5 knots at times and steady 7 to 8's between the surfs down the 4 to 6 foot waves. Finally, some awesome sailing and made through Grays reef about 20 NM away in no time flat.

Once through the reef, we fell off about 30 degrees to broad reach our way to Charlevoix, a really beautiful

city and one of the nicest marinas I've ever been to. With the Canadian flag flying, we were met by a sailor who helped dock us; he was next to us on his first sail boat, a C&C 121 that he bought new after sailing only once. The Abbott suddenly didn't seem so big anymore, especially after joining our neighbors for a pancake breakfast that they cooked aboard their yacht for us and several other people. Double sinks, hot pressurized water, wrap around plush upholstery, beautiful wood work, central air and heat, an amazing other side of sailing that we don't see too much on Lake St. Clair.

Two nights at Charlevoix enjoying some fine dining and a few bars, we sailed the last 150 nm to Lake Muskegon non-stop on a quiet Lake Michigan. We had a very different experience than last year's horrendous weather that I'd experienced aboard Sorceress.

With Tom on the bus to Detroit, and Luke's launch scheduled for 10:00 AM Tuesday morning, we headed to Muskegon from Grand Rapids. Luke had completed some major upgrades to his boat over the winter and was anxious to launch her. He too had put a lot of time, money and effort into his boat which seems so typical of sailing in general.

The launch was flawless, all the upgrades proved positive and at 6:00 PM Wednesday we left for Chicago, a 100 nm sail across the lower part of Lake Michigan. The winds were up, and we reached along all night at 6.5 to 7 knots in rainy, foggy conditions. The new AIS (Automatic Identification System) that I installed into the Abbot proved priceless, as I could see any freighter within 10 miles of us, what their boat name was, how far away, the closest point of approach and speed. In other situations, I found it nerve wrecking to be sharing the water in foggy conditions with these beasts, hearing them but not seeing them. Now with the AIS, I can sail without the worries of a freighter than can be heard but not seen!

The Chicago skyline appeared the next morning. We arrived around 10 am, and eventually ended up at the Chicago Yacht Club that had reciprocity with Southport (although I don't think it was our Southport) so we got to stay there for \$60/night, no doubt a bargain in Chicago.

Very cool to be sitting on our boats watching all the buzz on the waterfront of Chicago, getting our boats ready for the race that started on Saturday the 18th. The night before the race started, we had a nice skippers meeting, met with the racers from the area and enjoyed a good meal that was all part of the race

fee. Luke and I were hoping to show the sailors from the big lake that Lake St. Clair sailors were every bit as good as they were.

Saturday's 8:00 am start was slow, virtually no wind, taking more than 20 minutes to cross the start line for me, Luke's Sorceress was long gone by this time, it loves the light air. He looked destined to win the annual bet that we have where the loser buys a nice (expensive) meal on the island after the race. To this point, we were tied at 1 and 1. Luke did his first Port Huron to Mackinaw Solo on his Shark in 2007, taking 85 hours to finish the race in light air. He soon sold LoanShark and eventually ended up with Sorceress, a really cool X102 yacht with major modifications to the hull and deck, much roomier and faster than his Shark.

Saturday's air was fluky as we continued to beat up Lake Michigan. The evening brought some heavier air and I reached through the night with a #3 sail and reefed main, pretty steady 7+ knots as I tried to catch some cat naps. The auto pilot worked great on the Abbott, and I rarely steered in most conditions. Solo sailors tend not to steer the boat, there is often too many other things to do. When you're the fore deck person, tactician, helmsman, pit man, cook and bar tender there is little time to steer. Most races of this distance takes between 60 and 85 hours to finish, a good test of endurance and patience.

Sunday's winds lightened as we approached the Michigan shoreline headed into the Manitou Passage. Rain and shifting winds kept us on our toes as we raced through the narrow passage with poor visibility, hazards and freighters sharing the same passage as we tacked our way through this. Soon the wind was back up to 15-20 as we sailed by instruments through these hazardous waters.

By now I had pulled about 25 miles ahead of the boats in my fleet and ahead of Luke by 3 or 4 miles. Once I cleared the Manitou passage around 2:00 am, I set a course for Gray's reef and headed down for a longer nap. Hoping to get 20 or 30 minutes of rest, I awoke 2 ½ hours later sailing directly towards Fox Island, about 2 miles away! Too close of a call, but glad to have awoke when I did. I had sailed 12 nm miles asleep, definitely not a good thing!

A tack away from the island, Quick & Dirty was about 30 nm miles from Gray's reef, and another 20 miles to finish the race. I was starting to feel pretty good about this new boat, liked the way it sailed and sensed a

bonding between us, similar to the one I had with Blue Jay.

With the wind building, I started to do a head sail change when a loud snap was followed by a sickening site, the mast bent over 45 degrees with the spreader broke away from the mast. My first reaction was to position myself in a safe place so that when the mast snapped I wouldn't be injured. My next reaction was to release the geno and main sheets, followed by dropping the sails. My race was over! I felt sick to my stomach as I took the sails down quickly and secured to mast with whatever halyards available. 45 minutes later with the mast and loose equipment secured and tightened, the broken spreader hanging to one side, I reported in for the 8:00 AM call in (solo sailors are required to report their positions every 6 hours). It would be my last call in as I formally retired from the race. Luke was as disappointed as I was; he wanted to win fair and square.

Defeated, devastated, drained of any adrenaline that had kept me going for the last 47 hours of racing, Lake Michigan won again. The 12 hours it took to motor into 4 foot head waves, 20 knots of true wind speed on the nose and breaking waves spraying over the Abbott with the wobbly mast was one of the worst experiences I'd ever had while sailing. How could this boat that I put my heart and soul into over the last six months fail me like this? I hated this boat right then and there and missed by Viking in a bad way. It has never failed me in over 20 years of sailing, including two solo Mackinaw races and rough returns.

I pulled into Mackinac Island about 9 PM, docked and waited for Luke to finish. He finished about 11:00 pm in the same 20 knot wind on the nose, beating the last 90 miles. He finished second, and got his bronze medallion with the Chicago to Mackinaw Solo inscribed on it, something I wouldn't receive, a DNF doesn't qualify as a finisher. Although proud of Luke, the next couple of days still felt like I had been in a car accident.

Time has a way of curing all ills, and since that time, we did a repair job at Mackinaw with the help of other solo sailors, especially Bob Van Eck who had drills, rivets and other supplies to reattach the spread to the mast. The return sail from Mackinaw included another quick stop at Presque Isle, then a non-stop passage to Port Huron Yacht Club, about 170 nm down Lake Huron; it was good to be heading home. Luke had to hard steer all night after stepping on and breaking his auto pilot into two pieces. We made good time, sailing the whole way

in about 25 hours averaging about 6.8 knots. Jeff Golding on Eye M Electric joined us for the non-stop solo passage to PHYC and enjoyed the great winds that we had. I sailed more conservatively during the night, reducing sail earlier than I would normally do, I now lacked confidence in the boat's ability to hold up to heavier air. Jeff cooked a great breakfast for us at PHYC aboard his yacht, very comfortable compared to the Abbott or the Viking and appreciated.

Another rest at PHYC, as always a good meal at our favorite Italian restaurant, a bit of socializing with the PHYC members and we made our final trip down the St. Clair river. Quick & Dirty sailed Belle River and Luke to City Marina where Sorceress is staying for near future

The 'get acquainted' trip for me lasted 24 days, covered over 1200 nautical miles and included some good sailing, great solo racing, good bonding with my brother and Luke. Although Quick & Dirty failed the Litmus test, she's on probation for the next season or so. I can now remember the sail numbers on her, maybe a sign that we're coming to terms with each other. In the meantime, Blue Jay is continuing to provide great sailing experiences for her new owner, now renamed Shenanigans, and I know it will take as good of care of her as she did for me and my family in over 25,000 nautical miles that we sailed her.

SUPER MAC AND BACK

By Adrian van den Hoven

Editor's note:

Adrian has completed 4 Mac Solo Challenges from Port Huron and one from Chicago. In 2009 he completed the Trans Superior Solo Challenge. In 2010 he completed the Ontario 300 Solo Challenge. He has also completed 2 Lake Erie Solo Challenges. In 2011 he completed all three legs of the Super Mac and Back in first place. Adrian is the first Canadian to complete the Super Mac and Back. Adrian turned fifty this summer.

A Short History of a Long Race

(Excerpted from an article by Bill Tucker)
(www.solosailors.org/pdfs/supermacandback08-tucker.pdf)

I am told that the first singlehanded Mac, known as the *Port Huron to Mackinac Island Solo Challenge*, was the brain child of a bunch of sailors sitting around a bar table during a wintery evening in Michigan.

The first *Solo Mac* was held in June of 1979, a race of 230 nautical miles. That wasn't enough sailing for some, and in 1981 the first *Super Mac* was held in which skippers just waved at Mackinac Island as they sailed on their way to Chicago for a race of 517 miles. In 1997 the *Chicago Mac* was held with the initiation of a race of 287 nautical miles from Chicago to Mackinac Island held at the same time as the *Port Huron Solo Mac*. In 2002 the first *Super Mac from Chicago* was held along with the Super Mac from Port Huron. Of course, if your home port is Port Huron and you have just sailed to Chicago, why not race back home, and so, in June 2008, the first *Super Mac and Back* was held with starting lines at both Chicago and Port Huron. The *Super Mac and Back* is officially held every three years. For the first running, Bill Tucker estimated that the 1034 miles should take about 8 to 12 days. He actually finished in 11.5 days (uncorrected time). The winner at 8 days, 17 hrs. 29 minutes, 49 seconds was Walt Norris on Yuk Fu Too (corrected time)

Adrian's Story

In 2008, after a seven year hiatus, I returned to solo sailing. That year featured the first running of the Super Mac and Back in which two boats finished from each of the Port Huron and Chicago sides. Walt Norris and Bill Tucker were the Port Huron finishers with Walt taking home first place. In looking at that time over a few beers with a friend, Peter, we figured it would be nearly impossible to beat that time.

Since returning to racing in 2008, Ophir and I have managed to complete a Solo Challenge on all five of the Great Lakes; coming in first in all but the Lake Ontario 300. Born in 1961, I began to consider what challenges I could take on in my 50 year. After reading Bill Tucker's "My story", I realized that an attempt at the Super Mac and Back would be almost three times longer than my longest solo race to date; the Trans-Superior was, after all, 338 miles compared to the 1034 miles from Port Huron to Chicago and return. The race would take 10 to 12 days and who knows what kind of weather Mother Nature would deal out in that length of time. The memories of last year's 52 knot winds on Lake Ontario were still fresh in my mind. After rereading Bill's story once more I decided "Why not?" and began planning the upgrades needed for such a grueling challenge.

I talked about upgrading my chart plotter with John Gyles and after much consideration regarding weight, John and I chose to install a RayMarine C90 Radar on a mast at the stern of the boat. I also re-torqued all of the keel bolts, serviced all the winches and, to save power, switched to LED lights. All the safety equipment was double-checked before we left port.



My friend, Jamie, was willing to assist with another delivery so, after provisioning Ophir we were ready to depart Collingwood; it was nearly midnight on Friday June 10. While motoring out of the harbor channel, our eyes were fixed on the radar screen (“You can go anywhere on the Great Lakes with this radar running”). Bang! We hit one of the small green spar buoys marking the channel. I ran forward to push the can away from the hull. I quickly checked the bow lights and along the hull and everything looked okay. “Go anywhere on the Great Lakes with this radar.... sure we can’t get out of my own harbor!” After my rant, Jamie started to laugh, “that was funny buddy.” I agreed and remarked that “I hope no one was watching.”

We hoisted the mainsail and installed the reefing lines and were sailing with 12 knots on the stern. It was cool as the water temperature was 42.1F. Later Saturday morning the wind died and a light rain began to fall. We arrived in Tobermory at 1500 and began to work on the “things to do list”. We had a good night’s sleep at the ‘Tub’. The following day we left at 1800 with winds at 10 knots and then building to 20 knots off the Starboard quarter; OPHIR hit 10 knots. We pulled into Goderich at 0930 having sailed 98 miles in 15 hours.

While packing the main, 2 slides came off the battcar system. I phoned John Gyles to order 6 new

cars with ball bearings; having the mainsail coming out of the track would dash any hope of finishing the SM&B.

While in Goderich I visited family and Jamie was picked up by a friend. It was time to head for Sarnia, alone. I departed Goderich at 2000 Tuesday and Ophir and I arrived in Sarnia the next day at 0545. After a nap I went for breakfast and a visit to Doyle Sailmakers to pick up the new battcars. After installing them I went overboard, in 64F water, to clean Ophir’s bottom. I also topped up the batteries with distilled water and battery equalizer. I joined the Wednesday night racers for pizza and beer in the clubhouse and sat down to watch game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals. By the second period it was Boston 3, Vancouver 0, so I headed for bed.

Thursday was pump out, top up the fuel tank and head down the St. Clair River to the Black River where the Port Huron Yacht Club is located. I had dinner with a few of the solo sailors. Friday morning was breakfast, a trip to provision Ophir and a final trip up the mast to check the rig. The day ended with me in charge of a skippers meeting at the Thomas Edison Inn at the base of the Bluewater Bridge.

Saturday June 18 was race day. I am always a little nervous starting a Solo Challenge. The morning start was 0900 ET. The Chicago counterpart starts at 0800CT so we were starting at the same time. Of the 16 starting boats, 12 were expected to finish at Mackinac Island with four of us continuing on to Chicago.

The Race

The start was in light winds at 1 to 2 knots. After using my windseeker to cross the start line we were up and racing. It took some time but the winds filled in from the northeast on the bow. After finally making it around the Goderich mark at 2335 the winds were at 60 degrees apparent to starboard, course over ground was 330 degrees, boat speed 6-7 knots with the #1 headsail out to the toe rail. Sunday the 19th the winds continued out of the east at 10-15K. It was a bright and beautiful sunny day but the temperature on Ophir never rose above 17C with all hatches closed except the companionway. Late in the evening the wind died and after trying a variety of sails it was the light windseeker that best kept the boat moving in the

right direction. As a beautiful moon rose into the sky a number of freighters sailed around me. By 0700 on Monday the wind had filled in from the east and it was not long before we passed Spectacle Reef Light with the chute drawing. By 0900 the wind was SE at 10- 15K and a quick check showed that in the 48 hours since the race start, we had covered 242 miles. Not bad!

We crossed the finish line at Mackinac Island at 1053:25 having stowed the chute 4 miles from the finish due to concerns with the winds that were now gusting to 25K. Ophir and I were first in our division as well as first overall. I then called the Race Committee to inform them that I was going to continue to Chicago.

Nearing the Mackinac Bridge, I decided to reset the chute and lie down for a rest. Lying in my bunk I could feel the boat moving fast. I arose and an instrument check confirmed the wind has risen to 22 true so I took the chute down and sailed past Grey's Reef with the main up. Boats from the Chicago side were beating upwind towards me and Bumblebee, a Frers 52, had already rounded the Mackinac mark and was heading back South on Lake Michigan as she competed in the Michigan 500. Both of us put our chutes up and we sailed together for a while until her huge masthead chute pulled BUMBLEBEE (PHRF 36) away from OPHIR (PHRF 150). By Tuesday morning the wind had died again, so I reset the windseeker and doused the mainsail as the sloppy seas were causing the mainsail to 'flag'. Ahead, I could see the Manitou Light, so I trimmed the windseeker and set the autopilot to course and, with no vessels in sight, went below to rest. I fell asleep and when I arose we had sailed past the light and were almost clear of the Manitou Islands. OPHIR was doing about three knots with just a windseeker up. The winds continued light so we headed out into the Lake where winds filled in from the north giving us a terrific afternoon spinnaker run.

By late Tuesday afternoon storms were moving across Lake Michigan near Port Washington, north of Milwaukee Wis. I double reefed the main and put up the storm jib and, shortly after, winds hit 34 knots and there were several lightning strikes a quarter mile from us. After the storms passed, the wind settled in from the south at 20-25 K, so with a #3 and a double-reefed main we headed on a port tack towards the Wisconsin side of the Lake. I was counting on a correct forecast with winds veering to

the SW. During this time I had my first sound rest.. I would set my alarm for 20 minutes, sleep, wake up, look at the 3-4' waves and 200' visibility, check the radar, course, speed and depth, reset the alarm and go back to sleep for another 20 minutes. If you can get several of these back to back sleeps you feel so much better; your aches and pains go away. The constant movement of a boat seems to amplify the pain of old injuries many times over and the only thing that works for me is some prolonged rest.

The Sirius Weather Radio was showing a low approaching from the west, OPHIR was beating upwind with the auto pilot (RayMarine X5) helming perfectly set to wind. The cabin furnace was on, I was warm and life was good; I was resting.

While approaching Milwaukee, winds continued to gust up to 25 keeping me busy adding and removing reefs to maintain speed and keep OPHIR balanced. After tacking we were lifted up the coast with more squalls hitting us until I could see Chicago about 40 miles ahead. By now, winds had dropped to about 16 K and it was time to switch to the #1 headsail for more power. The wind continued to gust up to 22 knots all the way to Chicago and between reefing and hand steering in the shipping lanes my body was very sore!

Ophir rounded the Chicago mark at 4 Mile Crib at 0147. Our elapsed time was 4 days,16 hours, 47 seconds and we were in first place for the Port Huron to Chicago Super Mac; time to start back. I did a big long gybe around the light and sailed out on a beam reach. In the dark of night the best course is to sail safely away from this busy place. We sailed up the Wisconsin coast and during our 0800 call-in, Voyager, a C&C 44, called Ophir. I had been unsuccessful on many of my last call-ins to contact another boat. The rules make it mandatory to call other boats, take their coordinates and your position; it's nice to know where other boats are. Voyager and I exchanged our positions, there was a slight pause and Mike Spence answered that "you're ahead of me".

"I am?" was my response. Actually I had figured that Ophir was ahead, but to hear Mike say it in a positive voice confirmed my suspicions and made me smile. I was, on corrected time, about 13 hours ahead of him. My confidence in my satellite forecasts was justified.

Winds continued to blow around 20 K from the west, so I put the #3 back on. With a forecast of NW winds we sailed up the coast north of Milwaukee unfortunately suffering a lift during one of my sleeping periods. As the forecast did not call for backing winds, I threw up the asymmetrical spinnaker and headed for the Manitous. During the next 12 hours OPHIR sailed at 6-7 knots with 12 knots of apparent wind on the beam. It was a good time for sleep and I was able to get a lot of rest. Upon reaching the Manitous, the winds went NW at 17 knots and I was able to sail through the Grey's Reef Passage during the night while using the #1 headsail.

After sunrise we were ready to head downwind to Mackinac Island. While getting the chute ready I missed one of the aids to navigation; one that was not in the sailing instructions. I was tired and unsure of the rules and whether or not they required everyone to take all aids on the proper side, so I turned back and beat back to the G1(F6,4s) light. I was very tired but mostly mad at myself for wasting an hour unnecessarily. I promised myself that I would get that hour back and more. We sailed downwind to the Mackinac Island finish line and crossed at 0955. It had taken just over 5 days to sail Lake Michigan twice, a rhumb line distance of nearly 600 miles. I had some concern about the position of the other boats that were racing. By staying on the Wisconsin shore for too long and wasting time at Grey Reef, I would have to sail hard to stay ahead of Bill Tucker and John Ollila on GL3 and Finnair respectively. Both skippers were experienced, having completed solos on all five of the Lakes, and Bill had competed in the 2008 Super Mac and Back. I also suspected that Voyager had managed to pass me on the north leg of Lake Michigan, meaning I would have to sail hard to keep in the same air as Mike Spence. I figured an approaching high would provide a short sleigh ride down Lake Huron so I set sails for the last leg of this adventure.

I was able to get some much needed rest during the night but morning brought light winds and I was soon on the left side of the rhumb line, sailing downwind with light sheets on the chute. On Sunday June 26 we rounded the Goderich mark at 2149, sailed 18 miles further and fell into a big hole. Using a cigar to detect wind currents, I almost choked to death on the unmoving cloud of smoke but eventually I was able to get the windseeker to fly, hoist the main and then hoist the #1 as a 4 knot

breeze filled in from the east. The Port Huron finish was 30 miles away.

We finished at 1224, took the sails down, and headed for Sarnia Yacht Club. Mark Gutteridge from Gutsea was there to shake my hand upon arriving and said "Good Job, you have won the Super Mac and Back. Mark had mentored me during my first solo race and he was very proud of me.

The corrected finish times are:

<u>Ophir</u>	Mirage 33	7d 08:19:00
Voyager	C&C 44	7d 19:28:01
Finnair	Tartan 28	8d 00:04:52
<u>GL3</u>	Beneteau 30	8d 02:24:38

Reflections: What did I learn?

- I seemed to get sound naps when the boat was sailing in steady winds. When there was too much or too little wind I had to work the boat and there was little rest.
- From Spectacle Reef east of Mackinac to Grey Reef and the Manitous one needs to be ever-alert as the land is too close for comfort and there are a lot of freighters in a confined area. The best rest came in open waters.
- Having satellite weather and radar helped to anticipate storms, tacks and speed. This was very important in reducing sail in time.
- I ran OPHIR for 40 engine hours during the 9 days, 3 hours and 24 minutes of racing. Her fuel tank capacity is 73 liters. With radar, refrigeration and a furnace OPHIR was down to 4 or 5 liters in her reserve tank at the end of the race. I should have carried an extra five gallons (23 liters) of fuel.
- Your sleep timer needs a LOUD alarm to wake you up. A cell phone near your ear does not always work if you are really tired.
- Always carry extras; if the boat needs something to operate, then carry a spare. This goes for the galley as well: e.g.. Can openers, stove sparkers, etc.

- Make sure the electrical system is in good shape. Ophir has a 120 amp alternator with double belts and four 6 volt batteries in two series banks. There is a separate starting battery.
- I carried chart books for Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, plus paper charts and electronic charts for the chart plotter.

One must remember to sail safe if you want to finish, you have to finish to have a chance to win. Mother Nature dealt Ophir and I a great hand. In total we had only four light areas over nine days. Finally, If you are thinking about doing a solo challenge, just prep the boat and do it! It's a blast

2011 Lake Ontario 300....Oceans of Challenges

By Diane Reed

Editor's Note:

Diane is an experienced singlehanded ocean racer. She completed her first Solo Challenge with the 2010 Ontario 300 Solo Challenge. Her boat, One Girls Ocean Challenge, or OGOC for short is a Mini Transat, with a comfy length of 21 ft. Her web site is at www.onegirlsoceanchallenge.com

0900 just finishing the final checks for the start of the Lake Ontario 300. All the equipment is onboard, stowed and ready for action. 0915 engine's running, cast off the lines and head out to the start of the 2011 LO300. The smell of solo miles is in the air. I feel the breeze pick up the hairs on the back of my neck and the sunshine warms me. There's a smile on my lips. I love this stuff!

Turns out the line was much further offshore than I had planned for. Not to worry! We (OGOC and I) motor sailed our way out to the start line, I cut the engine just as the warning signal fires, and then pulled the engine and the mount off of the stern. One tack and we cross the start line on time, but just a little buried in the fleet. Next job....dig our way out for clear air and haul butt to Gibraltar, the first mark.

There are essentially two strategic legs in the Lake Ontario 300, PCYC to Main Duck and then Oswego to

Niagara. The plan for the run to Main Duck was largely based on the weather. We were socked in to a large hi system that was being followed by another hi to come through a few days later, and a short lived trough in between. In the summer, as the land warms during the day, Lake Ontario often develops a sea breeze along its shorelines. Then at night as the air temperature cools another inversion happens and a night breeze develops out in the lake. Our plan for strategic leg number one was to head out into the lake the first night to get a good night breeze to haul us along our way to Main Duck. With the new autopilot we were on our way! Wait a minute....why was the compass heading on the pilot changing? Hhmmmm? After a series of tests, reboots, reconfigs and lots of groans, I was still at a loss. The compass would only hold on apparent wind. Fortunately apparent wind is all I really need, and pilot #2 is working perfectly. We'll be fine. The life of a solo sailor is at the mercy of the autopilot.



By early evening on the first night the wind knocked as anticipated from the weather data. We tacked dropping us right on course for Main Duck. Perfect! At 2300 the moon was out and full of life. I was down below doing a plot happy in my little world when.....clunk clunk clunkity clunk down the side of the hull. It was earth shatteringly loud! I ran up on deck expecting to see the worst. Hitting something at sea can be the end of it all. Even on a lake, you can hit picnic tables, vessels, marks that have let go from their ground tackle and almost anything that the shoreline has rejected in the last storm. In the dark, I leaned over the side with my giant flashlight to see what was going on. We were still moving...didn't appear to be dragging anything (we've caught a few lobster traps in our life), and there wasn't a gaping hole or gauge in the side of the hull. Crazy! A month or so later I read a report out of the Trenton Air Base that said they lost a large yellow

training buoy and if anyone spotted it could they let them know!

By noon the next day we were on the back side of Main Duck Island. A great 24 hour run! Now time to recheck the plan for the second strategic leg while we head south to Oswego.



The strategy for Oswego to Niagara requires you to consider Rochester. There is a bay at Rochester, along the South shore of Lake Ontario. Rochester juts out a little here. If the forecast doesn't predict an easterly blow along the shoreline, you can almost always guarantee it will be light and on the nose from the west. I listened to the weather again. There was another trough coming through, but that was a day out. In the meantime, it was going to be light and lumpy. Clear indicators to avoid a shoreline run up to Rochester like the plague by heading out. After Rochester there is a straight stretch of shoreline for a few miles and then the shoreline slopes slightly south to Niagara's R2 mark. On the straight stretch the plan was to keep the miles down and stick to the shoreline. The forecast was for the wind to switch from the west to the south west and

this should ensure some shore breeze to keep us moving without tacking too much to get to Niagara R2, which is another fifty miles past Rochester.

By the next morning we were just at Rochester. The plan was good, but the barometer was starting to plummet! Time to listen to the weather again. This is the second time in my life now where I've switched on the VHF weather channel and heard "all vessels seek immediate shelter". Right....where was I going to go? I appreciate that OGOC's cabin is vast and spacious with all sorts of luxury accommodation, but come-on now....I wouldn't call that "shelter"! There was a serious squall coming through in that trough. Winds were anticipated to reach upwards of 35 knots. I see the squall forming in the sky. The weather report timed it for 0800 to 0930. Okeydokey then....shorten up with a single reef and switch from the Genoa to the jib. We were warned about this cell in the skipper's meeting weather briefing...just like we were warned about last year's! The wind started to pick up....15knots....20 knots.....is the one reef enough? 25 knots....30knots and the squall came through. It veered hard to the north. The rain was coming down so hard that you couldn't see anything fifteen feet away from the boat. I was heading north now and still clocking! Gosh! I crossed my fingers and hoped that no other boat was out there on my path! Imagine coming upon a freighter during this? How could you get out of the way in time? As the wind veered, it eased a bit. This was my chance! We tacked onto a new course laying us right to Niagara R2. Behind that cell came another bucket load of rain and the wind eased a little to 25knots or so. 35 knots was a pretty decent blow....it's not 60 knots, but it can still be damaging and shifty. Then as quickly as she came the storm blew through. Thankfully there was enough wind on the backside of this squall to keep us moving! Upwind mind you. Tacking back and forth and back and forth and back and forth! Ugh....fifty miles later at Niagara R2 we gently made our turn north and headed for home. The sun went down, the sky was bright with stars and the traffic around us was plenty. Another listen to the weather channel and the report confirmed more squall watches for western Lake Erie, Eastern Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence. As the night got dark, you could actually see the cloud formations to the east every time their lightening ignited. It was a gorgeous light show. Fortunately, it was a show off in the distance and it was moving south, but unfortunately it was also taking all of the wind with it.

0100 – last day of the race. Light air was starting to look like non-existent air! Then around 0100, we gently slid into a little breeze. This little spot of wind was going to take us to the finish line as long as we could get there before the wind would come up. A nice little 8-10 knot breeze out of the north east, gently taking us home. Of course we had to share with the rest of the kids....but not to worry!

At 0400 something in the morning OGOC and I crossed the finish line. We had had a great training run and another exciting adventure.

Our objective....nothing significant broke or failed us in a debilitating fashion. The autopilot adventures continue with great success as we continue to work out the bugs in the system with the fantastic help of CMC Marine <http://bitly.com/ckEmKy>, and we have more miles under our belt. Thank you also to Guarantee Company <http://bitly.com/hO5Rub> for their fantastic sponsorship, UK Halsey <http://bitly.com/aX4oBY> for stitching the sails back to gather yet again (time for a new suit for sure!), Lori Mason at The Store <http://bitly.com/9czhbY> for her continuing support of equipment on the boat, and to Aquafolia <http://bitly.com/le6qXN> for their awesome skin care products and fantastic sun tan lotion that kept me from frying like an egg!

The 2011 Trans-Superior

By Dick Lappin

Editor's Note:

Dick has completed more GLSS Solo Challenges than anyone except one other person. Dick has participated in every Trans Superior Solo Challenge since it's inauguration in 2005. He says this will be his last Trans Superior Solo Challenge but then two years is a long way off and he may change his mind by then.

For the record, I sail a 1972 C&C-27 (my 40th season in the same boat) and am a bit of an "old fart" as I just turned the big 70. I entered my first GLSS race (some call it a challenge) in 1981 and have since completed 26 Port Huron to Macks, one Chicago to Mack and three Trans-Superiors. Needless to say, my approach is a bit different now than it was when I was a young buck.

The Trans-Superior yacht race is a 326 nm biannual event sponsored by the Sault Ste Marie, Canada and Duluth Yacht Clubs. This year, the race had three crewed PHRF classes (including Bill Martin's SC70), a cruising class (allowed to use engines with penalty deduction), a double handed class and one solo class (Mike Spence/C&C44, Bill Tucker/Beneeteau30, myself and Scott Schoeler/C&C27's) for a total of 26 entrants. Note to future GLSS race chairmen- Please list names of race entrants on the GLSS web-page as soon as received to encourage the fence sitters and improve participation.

The race start is at the Gros Cap Lighthouse approx. 15 mi from the Soo Locks. Conditions at the start were light and remained so for the 25 miles out of Whitefish Bay, with Scott Schoeler gaining an early advantage by reaching over to the western shore and picking up a sea breeze as did Mike Spence, who was pretty much in a class of his own.

We then had a fine reach all the way to the tip of the Keweenaw (132mi) where things slowed down. I've found that in all my GLSS solos, the Keweenaw ranks No. 1 for fluky conditions, exceeding Presque Isle and Goderich.



After fighting my way around the Keweenaw for the next 30 mi in light, shifty conditions and losing ground to Scott Schoeler and Bill Tucker, we settled in for the next 122 mi leg to the Apostle Islands. As the 2nd night approached, thunder storms threatened, however we had ample warning from those with satellite weather and also a freighter traveling ahead of us which reported the timing, wind strength (35k) and direction of the squall. We weathered that in fine fashion but began a slog to weather as the front settled in for the next 20 hours or so-SW winds from 20 to 32 mph with

max waves at about 8' on the nose. I tacked back and forth on the rum line while others headed for the North shore. As I slowly made my way across the central part of the lake, I began to think that there would be an advantage in heading toward the south shore to get in the lee of the Apostle Islands and protection from the head seas. This helped as I approached the Apostles and ducked inside Devils Island.

As I emerged on the west side of the islands, the wind shifted to NW and we headed into the 3rd night and final 68 mi leg to Duluth on a glorious close reach in moderate winds. I might add that I equipped my boat with an AIS ship ID system. I was able to identify the freighters in the area, one of which was reluctant to yield right of way in the open lake. I also noticed that Bill Tucker, who has transponder equipped AIS, had fallen behind on the north shore course; I was pretty sure that Scott Schoeler was also with him.

I finished after 10am Wednesday morning, 93h,5m,14s elapsed time, my longest race of the three Trans-Superiors. I corrected behind Mike Spence and ahead of Scott Schoeler and Bill Tucker. Although there were only four solo entries, the three of us little guys were well matched and had an exciting race. It was a real pleasure sailing with Bill and Scott; Mike too but he was in a different race and out of radio range most of the time.

I would like to thank the Trans-Superior race committee, the Soo, CA and especially the Duluth Yacht Club for their fine hospitality and the great awards dinner held at the prestigious Kitchi Gammi Club in Duluth.

Postscript- I'd like to comment on a few things related to these challenges:

1. I slipped on deck and injured myself in the 2009 Trans-Superior, having to withdraw at Copper Harbor and motor the 190 mi back to the Soo using my 33 year old Tiller master auto-pilot as my 2005 Autohelm ST-2000 "crapped" out. I have since applied new non-skid surfacing to my deck and bought a Raymarine XPS-5 auto-pilot, which is a tremendous improvement.

2. I have had a Xantrex battery monitor for three years and it greatly helps to minimize engine charge time and be assured that battery capacity is adequate.

3. I acquired a Garmin chart plotter and a compatible AIS receiver this year, connected via NMEA 2000 network which was an experience installing. I'd like to get a satellite weather receiver but am reluctant to fork out the \$600+ hardware price plus subscription fee. Modern electronics are great and make for safer sailing.

4. Boat maintenance is the name of the game. I may be a little slower, but my boat prep is better than ever; the only casualty of this race was a burned out cabin light.

2011 Lake Erie Solo Challenge

By Paul Nickerson

Editor's Note:

Last but not least Paul has entered and completed all, that is 5, Lake Erie Solo Challenges since it was inaugurated in 2007. He has also completed an Ontario 300 Solo Challenge and a Port Huron Solo Mac. He is an avid and most excellent photographer and since he is also the GLSS President he has been allowed to place the most pictures in his article.

2011 saw a record number of participants register for the Lake Erie Challenge including 4 first time GLSS participants and some new participation by current members. Noel and Luke Brockman, would prove to be a very interesting and entertaining Father – Son combo to watch and listen to.

North Cape YC was again the perfect host for the start with Wally McMinn and his helpers finding dockage for all of the participants. The Surf and Turf dinner prepared by the Kris McCullough (Skip helped catch the perch) set the stage for the Saturday morning start.

The forecast was for SW winds Saturday morning with a couple of cold fronts coming through starting Saturday night. As usual the weatherman was right on the button with the forecast. The fleet made quick progress through the Lake Erie Islands and then waited as the cold front brought a series of squalls throughout the night.



Noel (above) and Luke Brockman make final preparations at the NCYC dock before the 2011 LESC.



Jeff Benson settles in on Scorpio on his first GLSS Challenge

Boats sailing just a mile or two apart saw totally different conditions in these squalls. One squall I remember lit up the skies with lightning and thunder for about 3 hours but sat right behind me. I sat there with a reef in the main and the roller furler ready for action

and finally saw nothing but a 1 minute downpour and a 20 knot puff.



One of the spouts from John Ollila's Finnair

As daylight broke remnants of the front were still around including a couple of waterspouts. One took dead aim at Noel Brockman on Quick and Dirty. With sails down Noel did what every good sailor would do, pulled out his video camera, said bad words and a prayer. It seemed to work as the waterspout veered away.



Wally McMinn took this shot of the waterspout that took aim at Noel and Quick & Dirty.

During all the squalls the fleet did a good job of sharing information on the radio and watching out for each other. I think Noel and Luke Brockman are the only Father-Son sailors to compete in the same GLSS event and listening to them on the radio proved quite interesting. While Luke was out ahead, Noel was often on the radio with updates and of course good fatherly advice like "put in a reef and slow down son". I thought what a great relationship as worried about his kid.



Nicknack crosses the Cuyahoga just off of Long Point



From Brad Enterline we see the before and after of a Sunday afternoon squall. From 40 knots to a full rainbow in about an hour.



Sunday the fleet made good time sailing down (heading for Niagara Falls) Lake Erie. With 15-20 knots of breeze, much of the fleet sailed past Long Point into the eastern basin and into round 2 of another cold front and more squalls. This line packed a little more punch and started taking its toll on the boats and skippers. Forty plus knots of breeze mixed in with some rain and lightning sent the skippers reefing. I put a second reef in the main in part to slow down as I heard skippers talk about the squall ahead. I could see it and didn't think I wanted

to sail into it. As I finished the reef there was this interesting low level line of rolling dark clouds approaching with a little extra foam on the water. As it hit the Genoa slowly rolled up about half way and it was off to Buffalo, but not without thinking about Erie being much closer and it was getting dark.

There were some dark moments for Greg Gorny and Lease Schock as the wind tore apart the Lease's mainsail on Avatar and the mast partners were shaken out of Greg's Serendipity. Both decided to limp back to Erie, over 20 miles away, under power. On board Nicknack I kept wondering if I would be able to lay Erie hard on the wind after rounding at Buffalo.



One last squall before the winds settled in at about 25 knots for the night.

The winds stayed strong as the fleet settled in for a reaching parade to the Seneca Shoal Buoy at Buffalo. Jeff Benson sailing his first GLSS Challenge was close beside me for this reach but even closer beside Luke Brockman as he approached Seneca Shoal was the Homeland Security Patrol. What these guys were doing out on the lake in 25 knot winds and 8 foot waves at midnight is beyond me. After some discussion they gave up demanding to board Luke's boat and went on their way, hopefully to read their "Notice to Mariners" with the first event for the weekly listing being the LESC.

I think I have said this in the past but one of the unique aspects of the LESC is after sailing 210 mile to Buffalo you get to make a 360 turn and head back 60 miles to Erie. This time it would be back into 25 knots of breeze and 6-8 foot waves with about a 4 second period.

Luke lead the turn at Buffalo around midnight with the fleet lined up behind him looking for the deceptive Seneca Shoal Buoy against the background of wind

turbines and towers of red flashing lights. Add to this the turn would include a jibe from port to starboard and turning hard on the wind all in total darkness.

On Nicknack I was amazed at how well the whole turn went, but with a double reef in the main and only half a Genoa, I was being fairly conservative. When I finally got the sails trimmed and the boat on course I was pleasantly surprised to see I was doing over 7 knots just off the waves and laying Erie without much water coming over the bow. I had edged ahead Jeff Benson by maybe half a mile as he was coming into the mark just as I was settled down in trim. Funny how sometimes these challenges turn into races as I owed Scorpio just a little bit of time. As a shoal draft keel-centerboarder, Nicknack does not like to point high so these conditions were perfect for her. It was going to be a long leg back to the finish in Erie.

The winds held and while gusty and shifty the fleet laid Erie with Luke Brockman leading the way to a 0955 finish. Not far behind was Adrian Van Den Hoven and then Dad. Noel Brockman was completing his first challenge in his new to him Abbott 33 and would give his son a lesson taking him on handicap or maybe Luke was just being nice. John Ollila and Bill Tucker both pushed their boats to the limit to lead the fleet on corrected time. The final results showed the 2011 Super Mac and Back fleet of John Ollila, Bill Tucker and Adrian Van Den Hoven finishing 1-2-3 on corrected time for the 2011 Lake Erie Solo Challenge. What a great start and end to a fantastic summer of sailing by these great sailors.

Dave Evans wrapped up the event perfectly when he said this was the toughest GLSS Challenge (of 24) he had ever sailed and we all know not to disagree with Dave. All but 2 of the boats finished in time for the Erie YC wives spaghetti dinner on Monday evening. This growing tradition provided a great wind down and some time to enjoy a special visit from John Lubimir and his tales of the 2011 Bermuda One-Two. Allan Belavarac and John Murphy learned a tough lesson about missing the spaghetti dinner as they finished after dark and were awarded visits by the Border Patrol (now know as the Boarder Patrol).



John Ollilla flies the Tartan flag for being top finishing Tartan and he just happened to have the best corrected time in the fleet.

The Fleet enjoyed a couple of wonderful days at the Erie Yacht Club as another front lit up the radar Wednesday night. Some of the sailors enjoyed the EYC evening race before the storms and then were treated to trying to get home in strong westerly breezes and chop on Thursday. So much for that northerly shift that held off until Friday.

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