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# The GLSS Solo Challenger

## Fall 2017

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### From the Helm:

WOW! Summer is flying by. The 2017 Trans Superior Challenge ended with the GLSS adding another GLSS lifetime member. One of the fastest Chicago Mac was completed in June along with the Port Huron to Mackinac Challenge, the oldest GLSS event. We added four new members during the Mac . And the Lake Ontario Challenge was as exciting as ever and added three additional members. **By this time 8 sailors added to the GLSS.** The Lake Erie Challenge is about to started on August 26th. It was the last of our Challenges this season and it certainly lived up to the challenge!. However, the fun did not stop with the Lake Erie Challenge.



In September a whole series of fun events were held. The Lake Michigan Solo Scramble on the 8th with the Lower Lake Huron Solo on the 9th! At the end of the month one of my favorite events, the St Clair Solo and Big Al's Race Steak Roast.

This has been an exceptional year. I expect that to continue. The year will end with great expectations of the upcoming AGM to be held in Toronto Canada for the first time on January 20, 2018. Toronto is a great tourist town with a wonderful theater district for those who enjoy going to plays. I look forward to seeing a large turnout there.

See you on the Lake!

Ken

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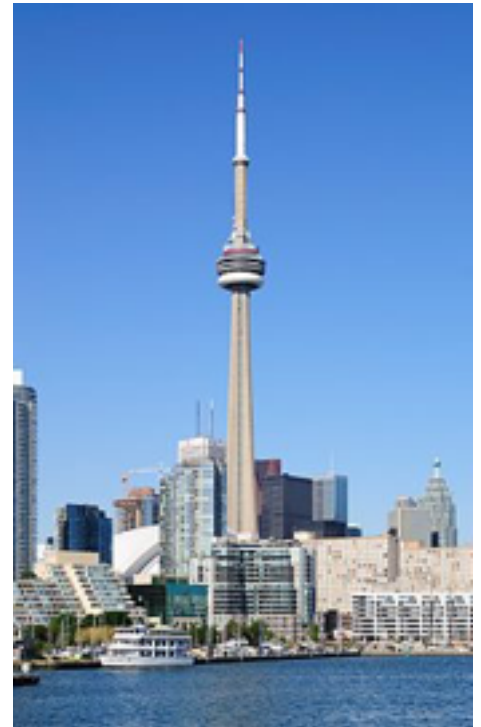
**"SAVE THE DATE"**

**2018 GLSS Annual General Meeting  
Saturday January 20, 2018  
Toronto, ON Canada**

Please join your fellow GLSS members for an unforgettable weekend with friends and family in Toronto Canada.

For the First time ever, the GLSS AGM will coincide with the Toronto International Boat Show during the weekend of January 19-21, 2017.

GLSS members Brent Hughes and David Courtney are currently working to secure a block of rooms at the Toronto Hilton Hotel in downtown Toronto, organize a fun pub night on Friday January 19, offer easy access to the TIBS on Saturday, the AGM and dinner on Saturday night January 20, 2108.



We have 40 rooms pre-booked with the Hilton Hotel, and sincerely hope to make this one of the best AGM's in recent memory.

Enjoy the rest of the season - and see you in Toronto !

Brent Hughes  
Pearl, CAN13775  
FBYC, GLSS



## 2017 Chicago to Mackinac Island solo race.

By Ron Smallbone

Saturday, June 24th, race day. I woke up at 5am to a beautiful clear sunny day and favourable winds out of the west. I quickly showered and had breakfast. I'll be glad to escape the poop dropping, incessant screeching, of the sea gulls that are so prevalent here, especially those of us that are moored at the outer docks at DuSable Marina in Chicago.

The first gun is at 850am (Central time) with one start for all 30 competitors at 9am. Simultaneously from Port Huron is another 14

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competitors starting and at same date at 10am (Eastern standard time) will hopefully all finish at Mackinac Island.

At 9am central time the 21st solo Chicago to Mackinaw race commenced. We were on a broad to close reach and made serious time towards my first waypoint north of Frankfort harbour, Michigan, a distance of almost 200 nautical miles. The sky scrapers of Chicago slowly disappeared into the sunset. I plan on taking the Manitou passage through to the mandatory turning buoy 3 at the Grays reef passage, then a right through the straits of Mackinaw, passing under the Mackinaw bridge and finally finishing in front of the Mackinac Yacht Club on Mackinac Island.

By the evening a severe weather warning was issued covering the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area and extending into most of central to northern Lake Michigan. You could see these dark ominous clouds with lots of lighting concentrated inside these dark clouds.

Sometime around ten o'clock in the evening all hell broke out and it struck me with a vengeance. I was sailing with a double reefed main and number three jib at the time. The boat went over violently as I released the main halyard rope clutch. The brand new main flogged about , and the main sail slugs popped out of the track. My second sail slug stopper flew away.

I managed to wrap two sail ties around the boom. I sailed the rest of the night, and a good portion of the next day on only my number three jib.

The other competitors were all dealing with their own issues.

Adrian Van den Hoven, on Ophir II, out of Collingwood, Ontario sailing his Mirage 33 had a rudder issue. He was having difficulty steering and radioed that he would be withdrawing from the race and will try to make to Muskegon, Michigan. This is one tough competitor who has done solo challenges at least twice on all of the Great Lakes. Another competitor heard the US Coast guard issue a request for assistance for a disabled vessel off of Muskegon. We learned it was for Adrian and tracker information indicated he made it safely to port there.

Ken Verhaeren on his nonsuch 30 had his table dislodged and said he had a list too long to describe the carnage in his cabin and damage to his sail. His wish bone boom was bent on both port and starboard sides. It looked

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like an inverted wishbone. The lake didn't calm down until late in the evening on Sunday off of Ludington, located on the east coast of lake Michigan.

By three o'clock Sunday I was becalmed south of Ludington. At about eight pm the winds picked up and I was doing hull speed towards the Manitou passage. The Manitou passage is the main freighter route. There is plenty of depth to stay just outside the freighter lanes. I met a total of four (freighters) at night while going through this area. They all converge on a very narrow lane at Grays reef passage. If you wander off some of these areas you will be in very shallow water!! It was at this juncture my closest competitors took off. I'm not sure why but definitely I had sleep deprivation and was not concentrating on sail trim. By the time I got some sleep my nearest competitors were almost ten miles ahead of me.

By Monday it was overcast, and raining with light winds. I had just exited the Manitou passage in a steady rain when a shackle let go on the main sheet. Luckily the shackle and pin stayed on deck and I was able to retrieve it and install back on the traveller.

I arrived at the mandatory starboard turning mark at Grays reef (Buoy3) it was 1101pm (Central time) or 1201am (Tuesday eastern standard time). The skies were clear and it was a beat up to Buoy 3, then a light broad reach down the straits of Mackinaw towards the Mackinaw bridge. Once at the Mackinaw bridge I really appreciated the extra talk that Rick McLaren gave to us 'first timer rookies.'

At night there is an optical illusion caused by the bridge lights shining down through the metal deck roadway onto the water. It appears there is no bridge opening and it is one massive wall. I just trusted my instruments and went through at the centre span. It also sets you up nicely on a tract to the finish line staying away from South Graham shoal.

The two green buoys can be confusing and it's important, you do not start your engine until the Race Committee says "Congratulations on your completion of the 2017 GLSS solo Chicago to Mac race." Welcome to Mackinaw Island". You almost have to sail past the harbour entrance to cross the finish line for the Chicago starting sailors. I received that welcome at 416am Central time or 516am eastern standard time. The sun

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was just starting to light the morning sky. What a rush of adrenaline hearing that welcome.

After tying up every boat is inspected for certain pieces of mandatory safety equipment. In my case it was an emergency ditch bag, first aid kit and jack lines. You are then required to turn in

your mark rounding and finish time report and radio logs. I was given a bottle of rum and collapsed on the boat, for a much needed sleep. ( without touching the rum. )

That day I met most of the Port Huron to Mackinaw sailors, many of whom have become good friends. They had a complimentary keg\* of beer set up under a tent at the back lawn of the Mackinac Yacht club.

\*The keg of beer is an annual tradition at the finish of the solo Mackinac Island race. The keg is donated funds from the widow Glenn Ellen Rubright spouse of the late Phil Rubright. age 65 (18 GLSS solo Mac races). Phil died in a sailing mishap around October 29th 2008.

On October 26th, 2008 Phil Rubright , Kevin Hogan, age 52 and Teresa Gravie, age 44 departed Rhode Island in route to Charleston, South Carolina. They were delivery crew aboard a 44 foot Swan the SV 'Free Fall' when they encountered heavy weather and huge seas. The boat was rolled and Phil suffered broken ribs. He activated his on board EPIRB at 716pm. The US coast guard attended the location and Phil managed to get into the rescue basket. Unfortunately the rescue helicopter was running low on fuel and they had to leave him in the basket. When the coast guard returned, several hours later, Phil had already died.

Phil was quite a colourful character and epitomized the characters that make up the GLSS sailors.

Another story involving Phil in a Single Handed race. He got trapped inside the lazaret during a race. He managed to free himself by pounding the latch, and thus popping open the cover. The boat was on auto helm and took him directly to the mark. Many of his competitors ended up going to the wrong mark!

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Next stop the Trans Superior race August 4th Sault Ste Marie, Michigan to Duluth, Minnesota. Ron Smallbone. SV Epiphany.

## RESULTS OF THE MAC CHALLENGES!

<http://www.solosailors.org/pdfs/mac17results.pdf>

## New Members from the LO Solo Challenge.



James Roscoe was won the President's Cup and finished second overall.

## RESULTS OF THE LO 300 SOLO CHALLENGE!

<http://www.solosailors.org/lo300.php>



Ron Smallbone SV Epiphany, Port Credit Yacht Club

This is the big one, one of the longest solo fresh water races in the world. This race starts outside Sault Ste Marie, Michigan and finishes at Duluth, Minnesota, a rum line distance of 326 nautical miles. This is their 25th anniversary, a biennial race held every other year with fully crewed boats with a smaller single handed division. In total there are 37 competitors for this years trans Superior race and down to only nine single handed boats. The Duluth Yacht Club is the organizing authority for this event.

Lake Superior, the lyrics immortalized by Canadian singer, song writer Gordon Lightfoot, in his 1976 hit song 'the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald', the big lake they call Gitche gumee.

My good friend, long time single handed sailor Jan Steyn who sails out of Youngstown, NY gave me some frank, simple advice, 'Mast up, keel down always'. \*

\*Jan should know, he lost his boat ' Solid Air', a Columbia 32 carbon when he lost steerage during the June 2013 Newport to Bermuda, 'one - two'. This was during the single handed portion of the race. Fortunately for him he was rescued by a fellow competitor, Wyoming resident Dan Alonso, skippering a Hallberg-Rassy 49, 'Halcyon'. This occurred about 200 nautical miles from the finish line at Bermuda. Jan's abandoned boat has never been found, and presumed to have sank, sometime after this rescue.



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Come to think about it , many of my single handed friends, including myself, have lost gear , or donated aluminium into the Great Lakes. ( George Minarik, Carolyn Archibald on Lake Ontario and Lease Schock, on Lake Erie lost their rigs, that readily come to mind). I also had my rudder snap off during the 2016 Lake Erie solo challenge. Equipment failures and losses are going to occur if you are out there long enough. The risks today are somewhat mitigated by our safety, technology, and qualifier requirements.

I personally, am of the opinion, that the most dangerous endeavour we will ever do, is to drive a motor vehicle to our Yacht Club. Or even worse, engage in a sedentary life style sitting comfortably in front of our laptops and television screens.

On Monday July 31st, at 1pm, I caught the northbound Greyhound bus from Toronto's downtown bus terminal. This was quite the circuitous route stopping at the Yorkdale mall, then Parry Sound (for a rest stop) before finally arriving at the Sudbury bus terminal. About an hour lay over later and a different driver we headed west on a packed bus towards Sault Ste Marie, with stops in some of the smaller communities along the way. It was after midnight when I finally arrived at the Howard Johnson hotel/ bus terminal in Sault Ste Marie. At this time I tried to use my cell phone but it started to make symptoms discovered earlier relating to a faulty operating system (according to the Apple technician at Sherway Gardens). The technician reinstalled a new operating system and I thought my cell phone troubles were behind me. I used a pay phone to call a cab, and sometime after 1am I arrived back at the Bellevue Marina. I noticed Worthy Pearl (Mac McKenzie from Etobicoke Yacht Club) had moved onto the same dock. The next day I met Mac and learned he will also be going to the George Kemp Downtown Marina on the US side of the Sault this Thursday, August 3rd.

I did some major provisioning and used a cab to shuttle my groceries back to the boat. The heat and humidity today is stifling and the Dometic cooler blew a fuse and melted the connector. I then hard wired the cooler into an existing circuit that I had previously wired, but never used, for refrigeration. When I was packing the cereal I usually remove the outer box to save space. Big mistake, the bottom of the rice crispy bag split open spilling the contents inside the port side shelf. I ended up turning in early. During the night there were lots of lightning and rain showers.

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On Wednesday August 2nd, I was up early and met my boat neighbour Raymond on his 25 foot, California built C.Dory, called 'Drifter'. Raymond said the fishing this year has been pretty poor. He usually goes out to the rapids near the St Mary's locks where there is lots of

fish, but they are just not biting. He said the water temperature is about 60 degrees Fahrenheit, which is about normal for this time of the year. I walked to the nearest Fido outlet located at the Station Mall in downtown Sault Ste Marie, (293 Bay Street.) I bought a new iPhone SE32, a required piece of gear (a working Cell phone) for the trans Superior. I'm sure this phone will be obsolete in a year's time. This set me back almost \$300 after service, warranty and transaction fees. Once back at the marina I installed a new starter push switch which I had brought with me. I topped up the water tank, and potable plastic jugs. I paid on line for my skipper meeting dinner, being held on a tour boat near the George Kemp downtown marina. That evening Mac and I were picked up at the marina by his son Ian and daughter in law Amy, who live and work in the Sault. We had a nice Italian dinner at Giovanni's.

On Thursday August 3rd, just after 12 noon Mac and I departed the Bellevue marina and took a short hop across the river to the George Kemp downtown marina. The east side of the marina is moored a historic freighter, the 1917 Valley Camp which is also a marine museum.

At 12:18pm, I checked into US Customs, (Reporting number: SSM1708031214) and then the marina staff assigned me into slip B17. There was a mega yacht called Denali, a N/M 67 docked next to me straddling the outer end docks. They had a real nice stereo system and played lots of my favourite Bruce Springsteen tunes. It was drizzling light rain when we pulled in and the rain continued for most of that afternoon.

There are some serious mega race yachts here, some with paid professional crews on board. Five of the mega yachts have negative PHRF handicap ratings, namely: Arete' -240, an Orma 60, Earth Voyager -222, a Formula 60 trimaran, Il Mostro -174, a Volvo 70, Ocean -123, an Andrews 77, Dinali -66, a N/M 67 and MC ^2 -42, a R/P 50. These are fast, expensive, light carbon fibre sleds.

My good friends, fellow GLSS members Dick Lappin from Rogers City (Ginger Kay, a C&C 27) and Dan Pavlat (Coconut Telegraph, a J 33) from

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Detroit arrived shortly after I had tied up. Joey Baker from Detroit on his Mumm/Farr 30 snuck in later.

At 530pm, after a short walk from the marina, Dan Pavlat, his cousin Michele and her husband Chris (Delridge), Mac McKenzie, Dick Lappin, Mike Spence and I attended Flannigan's Goat Pub (107 East Portage, Sault Ste Marie, Michigan) for dinner. It's a quaint family run pub and cafe inside, as well as an Adventure Bird's Eye outfitters store. Their speciality is homemade BBQ that is slowly smoked in house. The rain has stopped and it is considerably cooler now.

There was heavy rain and lightning throughout the evening and early hours.

During the morning of Friday August 4th the skies were overcast with periodic rain showers. Mac McKenzie, Dan Pavlat and I attended Franks family restaurant for breakfast. At about 9am we returned to the marina and checked into the race committee tent. At this time I received my yellow brick tracker and sailing bag containing two ball caps, sail ties, sailing instructions from the Duluth Yacht Club and assorted sponsor materials.

I spoke to GLSS member Mike Spence (C&C 44, Voyager) from Bayfield, Wisconsin who gave me lots of tips regarding sailing back from Duluth, Minnesota through the Apostle islands and east across the Keweenaw (peninsula) cut.

I met GLSS members Doug Milroy owner of a Sabre 34 MkII, the SS George Bailey (based on the movie George Bailey), my good friend ,Joey Baker from Detroit , on his rocket sled Farr/ Mumm 30, and Dallas Johnson from Bayfield, Wisconsin on his Schock 35, Texana. I spoke to Single Hander Richard Lett , originally from South Hampton,England, Velocity Girl, a VQ32.

Richard competed this year in June during the Bermuda One- Two. (Newport Rhode Island to Bermuda single handed then double handed back to Newport.)

Most of the skippers were doing last minute gear and boat preparations. I helped Dan Pavlat by hoisting him up to his port spreaders of his J33 to effect an adjustment. I then was hoisted up the mast of a Jim's (crew Chuck) C&C 29 ( Radio Flyer) out of the North Star boating club,

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( Lake St.Clair) to attach the head of a baby stay.

At 2Pm Mike Spence held an informal meeting for the nine GLSS single handed skippers near the George Kemp marina office. Everyone introduced themselves, their boat and their home port. He then went over the radio check in times on channel 72, Central time, 0400,1200, & 2000, every 8 hours. We learned that both Joey Baker (Peace) and Richard Lett (Velocity Girl) are equipped with satellite phones. Their satellite telephone numbers were provided to the race committee. Mike asked us to take a photo of our radio logs and e mail it to him at the end of the race.

Kris Henry from the Race Committee (RC) supplied the main RC telephone 218-461-6206 and e mail address: [transsuperioryachtrace@gmail.com](mailto:transsuperioryachtrace@gmail.com). (Especially in the event of with drawing from the race.) Dick Lappin supplied me with a map of the Duluth entrance and harbour and a suggestion to stay at the Lakehead boat basin. Kris then took a group photo using Mike Spence's cell phone.

At 5pm I attended the Soo Harbour tour boat for the trans Superior skippers meeting. Kris Henry from the RC emceed the event, followed by a buffet dinner. I sat with Dan Pavlat, Mac McKenzie and the skippers of Galatea (an Islander 36) and Eric Thomas, Red Herring ( C&C 38 MK II) both from Duluth, Minnesota. Tomorrow, barring any freighter traffic, we plan on making the 0800 (EDT) United States McGregor lock. The start is approximately 18 nautical miles away, starting at the Gros Cap reef light tower. The single handed start is scheduled at 110pm , eastern day light time.

Saturday August 5th, race day. I left the dock at about 745am (EDT). We got word from our race official (Kris Henry), that we better make the 8am lock opening as there are lots of freighters and one down bound cruise ship which was prepared to wait for us. All of the single handed boats made this lock opening and most of the double handed boats as well. I rafted on to a double handed boat, Tom, on Venus from Duluth, Minnesota, a Pretorien 35, Joey Baker on his Mumm 30 rafted next to me and Mac McKenzie on his C&C 37 completed the outside of the raft. Then the SS George Bailey, Doug Milroy, who was by himself at the front of the lock got turned around backwards inside when it started to fill. Doug is a single hander, so no problem, he just backed out of the lock at the end. Upon exiting the lock we were cheered on by Dan Pavlat's cousins. (Chris and Michele Delridge)

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It was a bit of a jaunt to the starting area at Gros Cap reef light. After a very short delay our start went off at 115pm (EDT) without incident. One of the Soo tour spectator boats positioned themselves near the start to witness the event.

Saturday turned into a beautiful day. Unfortunately the winds completely died at around 8pm and now I was barely moving. At this time I was located about 4 nautical miles south of White Fish point. That evening we had a beautiful sunset and full moon but absolutely no wind. It continued very light into the next morning. On advice from Dick Lappin I gave this point lots of room to avoid any negative current.

On Sunday morning, veteran single hander Dick Lappin (Ginger Kay) had enough, with the lack of wind, and called it quits. Single hander Richard Lett on Velocity girl, a VQ 32 was having auto helm issues and also decided to retire from the race.

By Sunday noon (CDT) the wind increased nicely and I started to close reach towards my next waypoint on the northern tip of the Keewenaw peninsula, north of Copper Harbour. (106

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nautical miles to go to this way point.). Unfortunately this didn't last long and the wind died again. The wet fog rolled in during the afternoon and continued into most of the evening. It felt like rain with so much condensation dripping off the sails, deck and rigging. The nights here are very cool and I am dressed for winter attire. The freighter traffic on Superior is unbelievably busy compared to the other Great Lakes. There has been a 'general notice to mariners', broad cast regarding the running of the trans Superior race. The freighter captains/ radio operators are very cooperative and have communicated with some of the competitors. They even agreed by consensus to steer around Worthy Pearl ( Mac Mackenzie) at one point.

Mike Spence, (Voyager, C&C 44) had been coordinating the single handed radio position reports. Mac later took over this role and did an excellent job.

On Sunday afternoon, one of the fully crewed boats, Wylie Coyote (a Wylie 40) had a crew member with a medical issue ( kidney stones) and he had to be removed with the help and coordination of the US Coast guard. They reported he was in stable condition, but in a lot of pain. He

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was removed off the boat with the aid of a Parks Service boat. Wylie Coyote continued racing after this medical evacuation and will request redress from the RC.

Monday morning looks sunny , clear and cool but so far very little wind. The wind eventually did come and I could do only about 4.5 knots towards my waypoint. At about 1115am (CDT), 40 nautical miles east of the Keewenaw peninsula I was visited by a few golden breasted nut



hatches. They came inside the cabin pecking for insects. I tried feeding them bread crumbs but they were not interested. I took some pictures of these bold birds who didn't appear to be afraid of me. I'll take this as a good luck omen!

At my 12 noon (CDT) my radio position check in, I could barely hear Mike Spence. It looks like my competitors have gotten way ahead of me and are now out of radio range.

The wind has also died with swells and current are against me. I'm lucky to make 2 knots towards my next waypoint just north of the Apostle Islands. This is something I usually have to deal with, being the smaller and slower boat. You have to have a certain mind set and enjoy the weather and solitude. At least there are very few bugs.

Looks like Mike Spence (Voyager) is also retiring from the race. He had numerous equipment failures.

Late Monday evening the winds increased so I double reefed the main and reduced down to my number 3 head sail. I headed north west to keep away from the current on the tip of the Keewenaw peninsula. My auto helm is acting up, not sure why, but tried changing the response levels. This seemed to help. The wind is steady out of the west, and of course right on the nose.

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On Tuesday August 8th, just after 5am (CDT) the wind died and I am back up to full sail, but the wind is still right on the nose. This is going to be a long race. It's a grey overcast day with lots of rain showers. Doug Milroy (SS George Bailey) has also retired from the race.

Doug is from Bayfield, Wisconsin. He later told me he was having auto helm issues and the lack of wind. That leaves just Mac and I in the second, single handed division. We are down to only 5 single handed competitors from the original 9. These conditions could test anybody's patience, (Insanity), but I didn't come this far to call it quits. Most of the day I sat totally becalmed. At one point I even took down the head sail. There were sporadic rain showers but no wind that accompanied these showers. Finally around 430pm (CDT) there was just a hint of wind out of the west and I could ghost along under 2 knots on a north, north west course of 293T. Well that didn't last! This is so frustrating. Who would have thought such benign conditions on such a big Lake. These little sun showers with absolutely no wind. The auto helm cannot even hold a course.

At 1817 (CDT) the Sault Ste Marie sector, United States Coast Guard hailed me on VHF channel 16. Apparently my yellow brick tracker had stopped working according to the Coast Guard, who received this information from the trans Superior race committee . I gave the Coast Guard my updated GPS position coordinates and advised them that everything was fine. As a precaution I decided to turn off, then turn back on, my Spot tracker. The single handed boats are using both trackers. The older model Spot trackers required this to be done daily, however, I have the newer Generation 3 model that does not require this.

Finally by early evening I picked up a hint of a favourable wind and started to make small speeds of 1.5, then 2 and later 3 to 4 plus knots, broad reaching towards my next way point, outside the Apostle Islands. This continued into Wednesday morning August 9th. Mac must be some distance ahead of me as he is now out of VHF radio contact range. I am definitely going to miss any trans Superior awards presentation and the planned luau party, which is scheduled for this Thursday evening on August 10th, at the Duluth Yacht Club.

On Wednesday August 9th I did make contact with Mac for the 0400 (CDT) radio position check in. We exchanged position reports. He was becalmed, but did have some great speeds registered earlier with the spinnaker set. The wind held for me, albeit lightly, throughout the night

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with some morning rain showers. Thankfully there was no lightning associated with these showers. The seas have been calm all night. The wind died again at 930am (CDT) and there I was, barely moving, sails clanging and banging. Speed 0.0.

At 1055am (CDT) I radioed the heavily laden freighter, the Stewart J Cort, who was doing 12.7 knots on a course over the ground of 79 degrees true. I just wanted to make sure he saw me. He responded after switching to channel 8, advising he did see me and that he would pass well to the south of my location.

Looks like I am starting to sail again, (1130am. CDT), less than 2 knots , 241 true, 62 nautical miles east of the Apostle Islands. No that was just a teaser, I am back down to 0 knots!

I did manage to contact Mac at 1200 noon CDT and exchange our GPS coordinates. We had to keep it brief as he had the freighter 'Spruce glen' bearing down on him. The Spruce glen's radio operator spoke poor English but was courteous and asked Mac his destination. Looks like Mac is about 15 nautical miles to my south west. Mac is sounding frustrated as me with the lack of wind, but we both will hang in there. It's really hot and humid today and the flies are starting to bite.

It's 1230pm (CDT), Ok I am moving again 3.5 to 4 plus knots, 285 True, nice flat seas, but an hour later I am back to zero. At 150pm it picks up ever so slightly just over 1 knot then back to 0 , then at 250pm CDT now it's 1.8 , very slow progress. This is a typical day. I also would charge my two deep cycle batteries two to three times in a 24 hour period for one hour at 2000 rpm's. When I am charging I would flip on the refrigerator Dometic cooler.

The freighter Paul R Tregurtha just passed me less than a nautical mile away, going down bound in the opposite direction. Even with AIS (Automated Identification System) they can sneak up on you.

At about 1630 (CDT) I set the spinnaker and was making about 4.6 knots on a broad reach. About an hour later I could see a storm approaching and heard an ominous thunder. I doused the spinnaker and no sooner did the pouring rain start. It was heavy but very little wind.

I checked in for my 2000 (CDT) position report and traded GPS coordinates with Mac. I learned Joey Baker on his Mumm 30 (Peace) had



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finished yesterday and that Dan Pavlat on his J33 ( Coconut Telegraph) finished this morning. Dallas on Texana should finish Thursday

morning. After talking to Mac I set my spinnaker and set the final waypoint to the finish line at the entrance to Duluth, Minnesota. The distance to go now for me is 85 nautical miles. I had to douse the spinnaker at around 2130 (CDT) replaced it with my number one jib. On Thursday August 10th at 0150am (CDT) I had to drop down the number one jib and just go with the full main. The rain is steady. The boat was starting to round up. I am now steering a course of 252 True, at 4.8 knots with 62 nautical miles to go. I was starting to get sleep deprivation and wanted to reduce sail to a manageable level so I could get some shut eye. There are no freighters on the AIS and I am on a course outside of the Apostle Islands.

At about 0300 I double reefed the main.

At 0400 (CDT) I tried calling Worthy Pearl and Radio Flyer for my GPS coordinates without any response. I expect they are out of radio range and quite a bit ahead of me. I now have 52 nautical miles to the finish line. The winds have subsided to 20 plus knots. At its peak it was gusting over 30. The rain has also stopped and daylight should be breaking soon.

The wind, rain, fog and huge waves continued all into the next day. This is the Superior I thought I would be sailing. The waves were huge but different than the other Great Lakes. They seemed to have a greater fetch and are more like ocean waves. I was surfing down these waves and recorded a record speed (very briefly) for Epiphany. At one point I registered 12.3 knots!

In fog ,rain and waves I crossed the finish line at 1532 (CDT) , located just outside the entrance to Duluth. I was shocked to receive a horn. I thought nobody from the race committee would be on station. I fully expected I would take my own time. There were lots of spectators cheering me on as I entered the harbour. One sweet lady (Dorothy) had been tracking my progress from the beginning and took the time to take some pictures. She even contacted the Coast Guard when my tracker went off.

Dave Johnson, from the race committee, helped tie me up, and mentioned that the Luau party starts in a half hour and I was expected to attend. I didn't even change, shower or shave. The Luau party theme and

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food was fantastic. There were free leis, beer, rum cocktails and soft drinks, music and a Hawaii themed buffet with desert.

Joey Baker won the Presidents trophy for first place in the single handed Division A, and I received a first place flag in single handed Division B. Mac received a second place in the single handed Division B, so we all are going home with race flags. I also was awarded the sweeper plaque. It's like the perseverance trophy, the last person sweeps up and makes sure everyone else is safe, is the premise of this award.

I gave Dave Johnson our PCYC burgee for the Duluth Yacht Club. The Duluth Yacht Club is in its infancy and is now just a tent on rented land, but it sure has potential and the right people like Dave and Kris Henry and many others to be a great club. Once they do have a more permanent facility our club burgee will be proudly and prominently displayed as one of their first club flags received. Dave also helped me relocate my boat inside a facility known as the Minnesota boats, located in the downtown restaurant district of Duluth. Access is gained through an 'on demand' lifting walking bridge. This marina is flanked by the permanently moored, historic freighter, the William A. Irvin. That night I collapsed on the boat and had a great nights sleep.

The Trans Superior ends with Dallas Johnson winning the President's Award from the GLSS.

RESULTS FROM THE TRANS SUPERIOR SOLO CHALLENGE!

[https://yachtscoring.com/event\\_results\\_detail.cfm?](https://yachtscoring.com/event_results_detail.cfm?Race_Number=1&ID=1517)

[Race\\_Number=1&ID=1517](https://yachtscoring.com/event_results_detail.cfm?Race_Number=1&ID=1517)

## **2017 Lake Erie Solo Challenge**

**by Allan Belovarac, *Moonbeam***

This was my seventh time sailing in the Lake Erie Challenge and was certainly one of the most "challenging! John Ollila once told me that the toughest part of a Challenge is just getting there if you come from any distance. For this delivery, I had to sail 150 miles west

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from Erie, PA to North Cape Yacht Club located just South of Monroe, Michigan. Initially I planned a leisurely 3-day sail, going no more than 10 hours a day and relaxing a couple ports along the way. That plan was scuttled as a period of intense thunderstorms engulfed my home area of the lake in the early part of the week, forcing me to depart Erie on Wednesday AM and sailing straight through to North Cape. About 12 miles from my destination Thursday afternoon, the stemhead fitting broke, sending the headstay with its roller furling gear and a fully extended 150% genoa swinging like a pendulum while I was on a reach. Luckily the winds were light and I immediately headed downwind to rig up a temporary stay with a spare halyard. It looked as though I would have to withdraw before I even started, but good fortune smiled on me as Wally McMinn was able to find a welder who was able to repair the fitting to make it functional again by Friday morning. Working most of the afternoon, I was able to get the rig back together and ready to sail. This was the second time in three years Wally bailed me out – two years ago he managed to get a diesel mechanic to replace my fuel pump.

Seventeen sailboats meandered up and down the starting line Saturday morning, waiting for the signal for the Challenge to begin at 1000. The course for the LESC is straightforward. After the start, you were to sail to the Pelee Island Passage, about forty miles to the northeast. After passing through the shipping lanes and nearby shoals in that area, you head to the Seneca Shoals Buoy, 100 miles to the east near Buffalo. After rounding the buoy to starboard, you then sail southwest to Erie, where the finish line is drawn between the two outer channels buoys.

Winds were light out of the northeast, not good for *Moonbeam*. With her shallow draft wing keel, she can only sail 50-55 degrees into the true wind. If that were not bad enough, she also slides to leeward. At any rate, I had to tack back and forth all the way past Pelee, with winds only 5-7 knots, interspersed with periods of dead calm. I took all afternoon and into the night to finally make it through Pelee Passage in the wee hours of Sunday morning. It was a busy night, with numerous freighters passing by. Throughout the early morning hours and into the Sunday afternoon I did a series of long tacks about 10 miles up 10 miles down crossing the rhumb line. Slowly but surely, I was making eastward progress toward Buffalo, but unless the wind changed direction, I would have to tack back and forth in what portended to be an endless cycles of zig-zags to Buffalo.

In the late afternoon, the winds began to build, though still from the northeast. Finally! Even though I still had to tack my way eastward, I would at least be doing so with some speed rather than barely moving as I had all day Saturday! However, the wind speed indicator ominously kept showing stronger and stronger winds, until by early evening they were blowing in the mid-20 knot range, with gusts even higher. This was not good, as the seas became increasingly tumultuous, with waves building 4 to 6 feet and breaking in frothy crests. This would have been entirely tolerable had the wind been blowing from astern or my quarter, but in order to make headway toward Buffalo, I had to sail as close to the eye of the wind as I could while I continued my endless tacks. With mounting seas, *Moonbeam* was striking the waves nearly head-on, making for an increasingly uncomfortable ride. She would climb up the face of a wave and then dive down into its trough, often burying her bow into the water. Every so often, a series of waves much larger than the others would sweep across her decks, literally washing over her. This continued throughout the night and into the early

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Monday morning hours. Setting the auto pilot, I sought escape into the red glow of the cabin where I heated up a bowl of hot soup and wolfed down a hastily made ham sandwich. From my protective lair I listened to the wind whistling through the rigging, and the waves crashing onto the deck. Occasionally *Moonbeam* would appear to stop dead in her tracks as she pounded down off the crest of a wave, sending a shudder through her hull and rigging. I couldn't help but think of the stemhead fitting that had been repaired just before the race. If that weld gave way, the whole rig would come crashing down. I kept rehearsing in my mind different scenarios of dismasting and how I would react to stabilize the vessel. Luckily, the weld held and *Moonbeam* safely carried me over the angry seas.

Others were not so lucky. The winds had ripped "Finnair's" main sail and she was forced to retire from the race. "Windforce" lost her drive shaft and began taking on water, forcing her skipper to abandon the race as he plugged the hole and headed toward the closest safe harbor. "Dulcibella"'s skipper was thrown against a bulkhead in the cabin and nearly broke a rib. As the night wore on, struggling against the headwinds and the pounding seas with no apparent relief in sight, I was getting pretty disheartened. Cold, wet, exhausted, struggling to keep from being thrown against a bulkhead as I huddled below, I came close to tossing in the towel and withdrawing from the race. What made matters worse was my right knee erupted in a painful case of bursitis, with my knee burning in pain and difficult to move. I limped about like an invalid. I began to wonder whether I would be physically capable of sailing the boat.

Dawn approached, the wind and waves continued unabated. As the sun peeped over the eastern horizon, I changed into a warm set of clothes, and somehow managed to heat up a steaming cup of coffee and down a couple high protean breakfast bars. The darkness faded, and so too did the doubts and fears that had haunted me through the night. I felt that my knee was going to hurt the same whether I headed to port or continued sailing, so I decided to suck it up and sail with it as long as it was bearable. Having successfully pounded through the night with *Moonbeam* showing no signs of strain or fatigue, I felt increasingly confident that I could sail on. The marine forecast also buoyed me up as I discovered that by mid-day the winds were expected to settled down to a more manageable 15 knots. What was more encouraging, they were expected to veer from northeast to southeast by Monday evening. If I could just get through the next six hours or so, I had a fighting chance of finishing the challenge. *Moonbeam* was still in it!

The long darkness of finally gave way to a hint of dawn around 0600 on Monday, with the northeasterly still whistling through the rigging. A quick check of my position indicated that I was in Canadian waters roughly opposite Painesville, OH to the south. The forecast called for continuing northeast winds in the high teens for the remainder of the morning, then settling down to a more manageable 10-15 knots in the afternoon. The bursitis in my knee was very painful, making it difficult to scamper about the boat as I usually do. I limited myself to slow, deliberate movements so as not to aggravate the pain. Throughout that morning I noticed the seas were especially confused. The northeasterly had set the wave pattern heading in a southwest direction, but rather than rolling by in neat rows like soldiers on parade, they seemed to be struggling with a conflicting stream of waves coming from the southeast. I don't know whether this was a remains of a passing system in the night or an

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offshore breeze coming from the US side of the lake, but the effect was like looking down into the tub of a washing machine as the water jumped and churned around in a pattern that can best be described as chaotically random.

As predicted, in the early afternoon the winds slackened just south of 15 knots. When it became apparent that this would be the case for the time being, I shook the reefs out of the main and let the genoa out to its fullest extent. Skies became partly cloudy and it seemed that I was in for an afternoon of rather pleasant sailing. The only problem, of course, was that the wind continued out of the northeast, forcing me to take those long tacks, making my way eastward in the maddening pattern of zigs and zags, chewing up time and miles while I crept steadily toward Buffalo.

By late in the afternoon, I put Long Point, Ontario about seven miles behind me and was on a long tack toward the north shore. The GLSS Solo Fleet had their VHF marine radios set on Channel 72 for inter-ship comms. Every six hours we would have a radio position check with each other to track our progress vis-s-vis each other as well as to chat with another human experiencing similar conditions. My VHF radio allowed me to monitor Channel 16 simultaneously, the international hailing and distress channel. I like that feature as it enables me to learn of any marine weather warnings, upcoming hazards, and learn about any vessels that may be in need of assistance. Around 1715, I heard Craig Campbell, the skipper of WINDFORCE hail the Canadian Coast Guard, noting that he was seriously exhausted and in need of a tow to the nearest port of safe harbor. WINDFORCE was the solo competitor who abandoned the race the previous day due to his boat losing its drive shaft. He was trying to round Long Point and get to Port Dover, about 16 nautical miles northwest of the Point, but was finding it increasingly difficult to continue. Sarnia Coast Guard informed him that they had no available assets to get him into port, and put out a call for any nearby vessels to assist. I was about 7 miles east of the position WINDFORCE reported to the CCG. Not hearing any other response to the Coast Guard's request for assistance from any boaters in the area, I marked my position and turned around in search of WINDFORCE to give him a tow to Dover. This meant that I had to quit the race, but when a vessel is in distress, one must render assistance if at all possible. Besides, giving a tow to Port Dover wasn't such a bad proposition since it's my favorite port of call on Lake Erie, with the region's best fried perch and pickerel. I cooked up some Zattarini's Jambalaya with spicy sausage, assuming Craig would be in need of a good hot meal when I got to him. At one point, while moving forward from behind the wheel toward the cabin, my right leg became wedged between the pedestal guard and the cockpit seat, causing severe pain made worse by my inability to get it free. This was the same leg that was currently suffering from bursitis on the knee! I finally get it free and my lower leg immediately began swelling up. I must have severely strained my ankle, foot and tib/fib. No rest for the wicked! At any rate, as I passed Long Point heading west, I was met by two Canadian Coast Guard rescue boats from Port Dover who informed me that they had the situation in hand and would tow WINDFORCE back to Port Dover. I guess Sarnia forgot to check with them when they said no help was available! At any rate, I was back in the race. I was glad the CCG had responded as they had more capable boats to tow WINDFORCE. I was seriously low on diesel fuel and we both may have ended up getting a tow. Meanwhile, I had lost about three hours backtracking, and now not only suffered from bursitis but had a lower

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extremity injury with a lower leg swelled up like a balloon. At least I had a fresh pot of spicy Jambalaya to feast on and a bottle of Pyrat Rum to dull the pain!

By now it was just after sunset when the wind shifted a bit to the north. This was a welcomed development as it enabled me to sail directly for the Seneca Shoals Buoy without having to endure the endless tacking that I had for the last day and a half. Locking the auto pilot on the buoy, I finally had a chance to lay back, lick my wounds, and have a decent supper. Forty miles lay between me and the mark near Buffalo, and I was making good speed (about 5-6 knots). I estimated I should get there sometime after midnight. The rest of the run to Buffalo was without incident. Finally, around 0400, the flashing red light of the Seneca Shoals Buoy came within sight. It's always a challenge identifying it with all the surrounding lights on shore, especially the flashing red lights from the nearby windfarm. Luckily, the chart plotter makes this relatively easy, and I finally made the mark, setting course for the final leg of the Challenge back to home port Erie.

The overnight sail towards Erie was actually quite pleasant, a welcome relief from the last two days. Aside from the pain I was suffering in my leg, the sailing itself was great. The wind was out of the southeast, allowing me to sail on a broad reach. No more tacking! I just set the sail trim and, if the wind direction held, I wouldn't have to make any significant adjustments all the way back to the finish! I settled in for the night sail, setting a safety zone with my radar to detect any unseen fishing vessels that might be out and about during the night. This allowed me to catch a series of 20 minute naps throughout the night, waking briefly to visually scan the horizon, check sail trim and course, then back to sleep. This routine continued throughout the night. When the sun rose, I was in the vicinity of Dunkirk, NY, about 40 miles from the finish line. Barring any unforeseen problems, and if the wind continued out of the southeast, I estimated I would be crossing the finish line by mid-afternoon. Late in the morning I was hailed by the skipper of JACK TAR, Jeff Marshall, who had rounded the Seneca Shoals buoy a couple hours after I had. We were the last of the GLSS fleet that was still in the race making the final leg home. The faster boats were already in port, leaving us cruisers to bring up the rear. I like to think of MOONBEAM as a Clydesdale, as opposed to a swift footed thoroughbred. She's heavy, broad in the beam, and doesn't point well into the wind. On the other hand, she's sure-footed, can take whatever the lake throws at her, and always gets me back to the barn, so to speak. I've competed in ten solo challenges so far, and so far I've completed ten, thanks in large part the seaworthiness of MOONBEAM.

In several previous Lake Erie Challenges, I've been bedeviled just before finishing by a sudden drop in the wind to near zero, causing me to wallow around for hours before picking up a zephyr to finally cross the line. I had just discussed this curse with Jeff Marshall on JACK TAR, when about an hour later, the wind died to ZERO knots! The finish line curse had struck again! I was in the vicinity of North East when a dead calm descended on the waters. Nothing. Zero. Sails flopping, boat doing circles— no forward progress at all. To compound the frustration, the skies were clear and the sun beat down mercilessly on MOONBEAM. Hot, muggy, and uncomfortable, I had no choice but to play each little ripple of wind in the hope of making inches toward the finish line that lay so tantalizingly close. Not having anything else to do, I started cleaning up the boat and putting things back in their proper places in

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anticipation of the finish, whenever that may be. Wouldn't it have been a kicker to have the calm last for a day or two! So close and yet so far. I put up with so much in this Challenge that I was ready to sit there for the next week if that's how long it would be to get some wind. After a couple hours of this, I noticed the faintest hint of ripples on the water. The ripples were followed by a soft movement of air that was barely perceptible. That was followed by a gentle breeze that was coming from ENE. If it held, it would put me on a dead downwind course right to the finish line. And it held! I set the asymmetrical spinnaker to port and let the main all the way out to starboard, allowing me to reach a speed of 5 knots or so. What followed was the nicest sail I had experienced ever since leaving Erie the week before. You couldn't ask for more, cruising to the finish line under full sail with a colorful spinnaker filled out like a giant balloon. As I passed the area of Harborcreek, a gentle rain drizzled down on the waters, cooling off the afternoon's heat. The sun erupted behind the clouds and I knew I was in for a visual treat, with the air still damp from the rain. Sure enough as I looked aft, a beautiful rainbow spanned the horizon in a perfect arc from the shoreline to a point offshore. After what I went through the last couple days, it was almost a religious experience. At any rate, shortly after I finally crossed the imaginary finish line set by the outer buoys marking the entrance to the shipping channel for the Port of Erie.

That night the skippers got together at the Erie Yacht Club, which hosted the Solo challenge Fleet. We had a great time swapping stories about the challenge, and I swear the height of the waves and the speed of the wind grew in proportion to the number of libations we consumed. That's what's great about this organization – the camaraderie and the shared experiences that bind these intrepid singlehanded sailors together, whether they finished the Challenge or not. As one of my former Commanding Officers in the Navy noted, it's the sea stories you have to tell that make it so much fun and bind us together in a fraternity of sailors. These Challenges have given me a ton of sea stories, this year especially. I hope that I have the opportunity to add even more in the future!

## **RESULTS OF THE LAKE ERIE SOLO CHALLENGE**

**Goto GLSS web page.**