

## **Round the Island Race - 2007**

The Round the Island Race is one of the largest yacht races in the world - this year 1,735 yachts raced one lap around the Isle of Wight, some 55 nautical miles by the shortest route - a real test for both boat and crew. The simplicity of the concept is part of what makes this such a great race. The other part is the fantastic organisation and support that the race enjoys, from the website which is updated constantly, to the professional management on the water and the voice of Island Link updating boats as they make progress around the island. It's worth mentioning that one of our number is the voice of Island Link - Peter Jackson who lives on the Island and is a new CC19 owner.

This was the first time I had entered the race, in fact any race...so I was a little unsure of what to expect.

Part of the plan when I placed my order for Sanuk (cc68) at the Southampton Boat show 3 years ago was to participate in the race, with a couple of good friends as crew. So here we go with my report of the Round the Island Race 2007, being the only Cape Cutter in the race.

Our class is the Modern Gaffers - mostly Shrimpers, Crabbers and Memory's with a Heard 28 for good measure. 18 boats entered this year, 16 finished and 2 boats retired.

Firstly, thanks to all the CC owners who have sent emails with good luck wishes for the race - it felt good knowing that there were other CC19 owners out there watching our progress.



Left Team "Sanuk"

Our adventure started on Friday 22nd June (the day before the race itself) with the journey to Beaulieu (Bucklers Hard) where we had decided to launch. We had decided to sleep aboard on both Friday and Saturday nights, ideally in Cowes if we could find a berth. My crew was Jonathan, (very experienced sailor, although this was his first trip on a Cape Cutter, or indeed any other small Gaff rigged boat) and Steve, a novice but very able friend who picks things up incredibly quickly.

Jonathan and I rigged and launched the boat by midday Friday and enjoyed lunch at the Master Builders pub whilst waiting for Steve to catch the train down from London where he had been working on Friday morning. We had agreed to pick him up at Gins Farm, the Royal Southampton Yacht Club base on the Beaulieu river, at 3pm in time for an quick practice sail. The setting was perfect. Sunshine, good breeze and an offer of a mooring at the club for the night.

We had a great confidence building early evening sail. Boat was handling fine, and the tacks were getting faster and faster as Jonathan, Steve and I gelled as a team. We abandoned our plan of overnight in Cowes, preferring instead to stay at RSYC Beaulieu where we were offered a berth on the club pontoon, and a meal in the clubhouse.

This change of plan was a great tactical move, as the food and drink that Robert lays on in the club house exceeded anything that Cowes could have possibly offered. There were several boats and crews staying that night, so all talk was of an early getaway, and meeting up the following evening to exchange stories.

We had worked out that to motor from our berth to the start line could take up to 1½ hours, and with a 05:10 start that means slipping off the pontoon at 03:30 - yes, 03:30! So alarms were set for 03:00 and we tried to get some sleep. I reckon I managed about 3 hours in total - a combination of excitement and paranoia - not wanting to oversleep and miss the start!

As it happened, we were all awake a 5 to 3 (before the alarms) so we put the kettle on, and made up 3 thermos flasks with hot drinks for during the race as we motored gently down a very dark and peaceful Beaulieu river. There was an eerie silence to the Solent.

As dawn broke, we saw some very interesting sights, Class 0 yachts and Extreme 4 catamarans milling around the starting area, fine tuning their rigs.

The waiting area behind the start line steadily filled as the first start drew near, and we listened intently for instruction on the VHF. The previous evening we had surveyed the line and worked up a plan. We were in the second start (there are starts every 10 minutes between 05:00 and 06:40) - sharing the line with 200 other boats, mainly fast catamarans including Ellen McArthur's Extreme 40 which took line honours!



#### Left Tacking up the Solent

We had a good start, on starboard tack towards the North end of the line. With the wind coming from the West, we had approx 16nm to travel upwind (but with a favourable tide) to the Needles. The practice the previous evening paid dividends with Sanuk performing brilliantly upwind. Our progress was all the more satisfying as we enjoyed a tacking duel with two

well sailed Shrimpers all the way. We rounded the Needles at 08:20, an average 5kts over ground in a straight line. The tide helped a lot, but we were surprised at the number of larger boats we had beaten to the mark. The backdrop at the Needles is stunning, and to be safe we took a fairly wide track around which cost a little time but we could only see 2 Shrimpers ahead of us - Spray, and Porthilly Dreamer. There is a lovely picture of us rounding the needles on the race website.

Once round the Needles, we were on a broad reach, choosing an inshore path towards St Catherines point, the Southern tip of the IoW. There was a reasonable swell in what Ellen McArthur describes in her account of the race as 'open ocean' and our speed was good as we surfed down waves, peaking at 8.5kts.



#### Left Approaching the "Needles"

Right: Reaching past the "Needles"

We chased Spray and Porthilly Dreamer all the way to St Catherine's point but just couldn't catch them. We rounded the point at 11:25 and chose a dead downwind run towards Bembridge Ledge Bouy - the eastern tip of the Island.



Steve did a sterling job holding out the genoa with a boathook whilst sitting in front of the mast as we goose-winged for nearly 2 hours. Again, with speed over ground between 7 and 8 kts we finally overtook both Spray and

Porthilly Dreamer, at one point racing side by side close enough to chat and share niceties. I found it quite incredible that we could be so close given that we had been racing for 6 hours at this stage...

As we rounded Bembridge ledge at 13:25 for the final quarter of the race home, we made our tactical error, straying too far into the channel and hitting foul tide.

The Shrimpers that we had worked so hard to beat stayed close inshore, and with a more favourable tide clawed back our lead and regained it! This was made worse as we decided on a cautious route around Ryde Sands (having seen several large yachts grounded) but the Shrimpers sailed straight across. The wind by this stage had built to a very stiff southerly - approx F5. We tucked in a single reef, but carried full headsails. We tried hard to maintain speed, but the die was cast, we were losing time and it took us a nearly 4 hours to reach the finish line.

We crossed the line at approx 17:20 giving us a total elapsed time of 12:09:38 and a corrected time of 09:59:46 and 7<sup>th</sup> place overall. We were delighted with this result on our first attempt, and thoroughly enjoyed the whole race. Many thanks to Peter for calling me with the information, which came as we were sipping our first drink at the RYSC club house on the Beaulieu River.

Finally, having enjoyed the race so much, we negotiated a mooring at Bucklers Hard for the rest of the season, so I hope to see more CC19's out in the Solent.

Some comments on the boat - Bob and Norma should feel very proud that they are turning out one of the best looking boats on the water. We had lots of nice comments from other crews as they passed by.

She proved extremely seaworthy, and also spacious with 3 grown men 'living and sleeping' on board for the best part of 3 days. We also stayed remarkably dry, as she cuts beautifully through the waves even in a steep sea.

Down-wind, a whisper pole for Genoa would have been very useful, Steve performed this task, but proved tiring after 2 hours of same tack.

Based on our experience, I recommend the race to all CC19 owners. Admittedly, we had pretty much ideal wind conditions, but the experience of rounding the Island will be a very happy memory for years to come. Once again, thanks to all CC19 owners for your emails of encouragement and support.



Left: The Team- Graham, Jonathan and Steve

Cape Cutter 19 No 68 'Sanuk'