

Week#9- Winners Talk

It was with grim determination that I left the comfort of a warm bed to go sailing last Sunday (my last chance to qualify for season points, as I will be out of town for the final day of racing). The forecast wasn't pretty: precipitation, possibly more snow, then clearing with a strong Clipper wind anywhere from 30-50 knots! I pulled on a set of thermal undies below my jeans, slapped on three layers up top, some gloves, a hat and ran out to the truck.

Upon arriving at the club, things didn't seem so bad. Yeah it was cold, but there was hardly any wind. Derek Jackson kindly lent me his second hull (my old '70s vintage is just too leaky to be racing against this fleet) and I set about rigging up as we started to see a few random, rather serious puffs roll through. Within 20 minutes, the breeze was up to a solid 20, someone said 27.

PRO Mike Matan laid it out for the intrepid assembly: low tide, so no sailing in the harbor. Yes, damn cold and windy, but not un-sailably so. They'd head out, run a few races and see how things went. The decision to sail was at the discretion of each skipper. Just to be safe I put on an extra jacket under my drysuit, and off we went!

Things started rather modestly, maybe 15 knots for the first race (a triangle) with big oscillations. Rather flat water. I managed to port-tack the fleet in a big lefty but still didn't round the top mark first. The first reach was very tight and full-on hiking. Managed to get close to Paul Craine at the wing mark then sailed a bit lower than the others on the VERY broad second reach to round ahead.

The breeze built steadily. Dan Lent was fast upwind, I went well downwind. In the third race it was probably over 25 knots, definitely so as the fleet rounded the gybe mark, making for some fun video by Andrew Scrivan (who wimped out, saying he had race committee duty or something... <grin>). Anyway, I delayed my gybe by about 45 seconds and had a smoking hot and stable angle to the leeward mark. Others who gybed right away had to try to work down in the now-gnarly 30+ winds. Carnage ensued.

So I'm sailing upwind to the finish with everything cranked on my ratty old sail: outhaul to the end, cunningham beside the gooseneck and vang whaled-on. Cross the line and hear Mike, in that accent of his, ask if I want more. More? Do I want MORE?? I was up for it, at first. The fleet, however, voted with its feet and sailed in. I followed and flipped two times going UPWIND (note to self: cleating mainsheet in puffy 30+ knots, even if eased out 9 feet, is not smaht). Felt tired yet exhilarated upon hitting the beach. We survived, it was kinda fun, and it sure was FAST downwind!

Kudos to Matan and crew for running 3-full and 2.5-radial races in horrible conditions, and Club Manager Trey Lang for letting us go out in the first place. Only by sailing in big breeze can we get better at it!

Hope conditions are better for the final day of the season this Sunday, and that you all have a wonderful holiday season surrounded by people who care about you. See ya next year!

Marc Jacobi