



Cedar Point Yacht Club

Sailboat Racing at its Best



Spring 2007 Frostbiting Week 3 (3/25/07) Report by first-time winner Alistair Duke Two Halves

This was a day of two halves, for me at least, though not in the usual sense. Conditions didn't improve markedly after a few races though most of us wished that they had. The halves I refer to were the left half and a right half of the course, and in my individual case the halves of the day before and after I lost my windex.

I'll be the first to admit that after 2 years sailing these waters, I still haven't worked out the tides. However, it was clear as we set-up for race 1 that there was the last of the ebb tide which was going to have the effect of pushing everyone across the line early. And so it proved. We got away on the second start, and by the time of the second race the effect had reversed itself - I am sure that tidal change had something to do with the lower than average number of general recalls during the remainder of the day.

There appeared to be a couple of good biases on the startline - significant enough that I was sure where I wanted to be each time. I assess the start in two ways: First, is the line square to the wind; and then, is the windward mark square to the line. Today the line varied against the wind, and when not square I usually felt the boat (right/stbd) was favored. Every time I checked the windward mark was square or right-of-square. More times than not I chose the boat end, sacrificing pole position for good speed at the gun.

Because I haven't figured out the tides yet, I pay very close attention in the early races to who goes where and how well they fair. I wish I was more scientific about it, but having read this column in prior weeks and wondered how I missed all the intel that was apparently available, some of you may find this to be a welcome change of tactic. :-)) Once off the start, it became clear that the left side of the beat was favored - a tactic that I think paid dividends all day. I didn't figure this out until race 3, but thereon bought express tickets for the left corner. High risk? Yes, but it wasn't a blind gamble. Just beware that there are numerous other occasions where I have been sure that I was onto something and faired far less spectacularly at the end of the day!

Downwind, the (Norwalk) left side was the only place to be. Steve Fisk and Dan Lent clearly demonstrated the latter to anyone who was paying attention. I noted that lots of people continue to let the sail out well beyond 90 degrees - very rarely is this faster than gybing. Running by the lee works best if you attach the flow backwards across the sail. So, when you are doing this right, the telltales stream the "wrong" way and your board will need to be half down to counteract the sideways slippage and generate good forwards power. This usually means sailing broad angles, not dead downwind... Hint hint.

Turning to the windex issue then. Yes, it was me, the noisy one (sorry about that) doing all the shouting at the start of race three. There are some sailors who don't seem to need any wind direction information aside from the sail and telltales but I am not one of them. And once without my windex, I was lost. I thought my day was done during race three and that was one of the factors that encouraged me to bang the left corner in the next race - I had nothing to lose, or so I thought.

If there are a couple of lessons to be taken from the day, I would summarize thus:

- to be confident enough to take a risk when you have reason to think it will pay off (but don't blindly gamble)
- to get your head out of your own little boat and look around at what your competitors are doing

It is a privilege to be part of this well organized and high spirited fleet. I look forwards to seeing you all next week.

Results

- *Alistair Duke* #181803