



CONSTITUTION YACHT CLUB



CURRENTS

Welcome to the mid-season CYC newsletter. In this edition we hear from Phil Haydon of his adventures while sailing Prairie Gold in this year's Bermuda 1-2 event. Phil was a first timer to the event and encountered an array of challenges to make the finish and to place - congrats to Phil on his accomplishments! Also we get an update from CYC Commodore Alexander Papps recapping CYC summer activities and upcoming plans for fall.

Solo to Bermuda

The 2017 Bermuda 1-2

Phil Haydon and shore crew Yolande Haydon

A Cruiser's Experience in a Challenging Race "I can and I will!" That was one of my grandma's favorite sayings and something I wrote in my cockpit to inspire me during the Bermuda 1-2.

Run every two years since 1977, the Bermuda 1-2 offshore race is one of the more challenging events open to amateur sailors. As its name suggests, the first leg to Bermuda is raced solo, the return leg to Newport double-handed. 2017 marked the fortieth anniversary of the race, and my first attempt.

My background as a sailor is not as deep as that of many I know. I've dabbled in water sports of one kind or another since I was in high school, but it wasn't until 2007 that I took sailing lessons (in the Delaware river!) and not until 2015 that we tried racing, starting with the CYC New Year's Day race. But I got the bug, and later that year entered the Wednesday night races, usually coming last but gradually learning and improving. And as I became bolder, I found that I also enjoyed offshore sailing. Eventually I decided to truly challenge myself by trying to race in the Bermuda 1-2 with two goals: to finish, and not to be last.

Preparing My preparation for this endeavor began in 2016. To maximize safety, solo skipper and boat must qualify by documenting a solo sail of at least 160 nautical miles, which I did by entering the Newport 160 race. While I was unable to finish the course because of exceptionally light wind, I did sail the required distance, so went on to spend the winter making repairs and upgrades. Upgrades to my boat, a Catalina 350MkII, included new standing rigging, new sails, a wind generator, and an AIS. Upgrades to myself included increasing workouts at the gym to optimize strength and stamina and research on sleep schedules.

Yolande Haydon says of the experience: For months before the race family and friends kept asking me the same two questions: "Are you going to let him go?" and "Are you going to join him for the second leg?" My answers to both were simple: "What do you mean, let him go?" and "Do I look crazy?" Apart from that, my pre-race preparation included ensuring

that Phil had plenty of life insurance, not looking too closely at how much was being spent on the adventure, and ordering T-shirts and hoodies for those involved on sea and shore, because it's not a real event without swag.

Newport, the Start (and the first problem) At the end of May I set sail for Newport Yacht Club, the US host of the Bermuda 1-2, arriving in plenty of time for a rigorous safety inspection with Ted Simpson. Although Ted's major focus was on ensuring that I had all the gear and backups needed to safely make the passage to Bermuda, he was generous with his time, giving tips and discussing his personal experience going overboard, including the pros and cons of tethers and making sure that your system is set so that you are not dragged behind the boat unable to grab hold and return on board. It was at that point that it hit me: this was serious stuff. No idea why it took me so long to reach that realization!

The solo leg of the race began on Friday, June 2. Five fleets set sail from just west of Goat Island in Narragansett Bay. I was in Fleet 3 and got off to a good start, crossing the starting line second in my class - I must have learned something racing in the CYC series on Wednesday evenings - and I was able to keep good position heading out of the Bay. The wind was projected to turn to northwesterly, which would allow me to take my preferred path, a course west of the rhumb line. As evening approached we could see a squall line heading our way, and when I checked the radar it was clear we would get hit. I started to reef the genoa in preparation but found that it was jammed! In my excitement to start the race I had unfurled the genoa quickly and hadn't kept a slight tension on the furling line to ensure that there were no tangles. I cursed mildly, reefed down the main, and continued to sail, hoping for the best. Winds quickly hit 35kts and there was a lot of sailcloth flapping as I was pulled to the wind. I learned later that all of us who got hit were struggling and that two boats had even had to turn back with electronic failures from the electrical storm. Later that evening I went to the bow to untangle about 80 feet of furling line. With the sail still flying it took a couple of hours to get it off the drum. As I was leaning over the drum I suddenly got tapped on the head then heard, "ding, ding, ding" along the side of the boat. I had hit one of those fishing traps that have a raised metal radar reflector and the reflector had cut my forehead.

Early Days The first night I slept little, in part because of the excitement and the adrenaline rush, and in part because I needed to keep a keen lookout for fishing boats; it turns out that many don't use AIS, probably because they don't want the competition to know where they are. Next day I was a little tired, but the wind turned as predicted and I was able to cross the rhumb line. I was now sailing neck and neck with Cordelia and Aggressive, two boats in my class. Since I had the slowest rating in my class this lifted my spirits: clearly I was in the race.



As the day wore on Cordelia and Prairie Gold began to push one another in a friendly way. I was flying my spinnaker as often as possible to give me an edge, so much so that at one point Cordelia's skipper Roy called me to ask: "Phil, do you have to put the kite up again? Because if you do I'm going to have to put mine up and I'll get all sweaty!"

Yolande: As shore crew I had the responsibility of keeping family and friends apprised of Phil's progress; it would have been too expensive for him to use his satellite phone to post updates on social media, and the only other ways to follow him were on the boat tracker or by checking the minimal notes on the Newport Yacht Club's website that were based on the daily calls from skippers. I did have to correct the huge misrepresentation promulgated by the author of those

NYC notes – he had the temerity to suggest that Phil had dined one day on a peanut butter sandwich and Oreos when in fact he'd had the traditional Prairie Gold hamburger on the grill!

When the Going Gets Tough... In our pre-race weather briefing we had been told that Sunday would be calm, and indeed Sunday was glorious, a great day to be alive and racing offshore. But the weather was predicted to worsen on days 4 and 5 with the wind expected to turn south-southwesterly. I'd plotted my course based on this prediction, sailing west of the rhumb line with the plan of sailing slightly off of close hauled on a starboard tack all the way from Narragansett Bay to the finish line. But we all know about the best-laid plans.

As predicted, the wind had risen and torrential rain had hit the fleet. Water had flooded into the saloon at some point, frying my computer and limiting my ability to update my course. I knew that it was important to still get some rest, so I was in a deep sleep when I was woken by a loud bang. I staggered up to the cockpit as fast as I could, but at first in my daze couldn't see anything wrong; however, as I looked around I realized that the genoa car block was missing – a 3/8th inch stainless pin holding it to the track had sheared off! I hurriedly jerry rigged a fix with a snatch block and began to relax.

My heart sank when the fix broke. I furlled in the genoa and sailed on main alone. I was tired, I was hungry, and I was at my lowest point. I called my shore crew, who offered some encouraging words. And then I looked up and read my grandma's words: "I can and I will." I decided to have a quick bite to eat, get some rest and revisit the situation later. And what a difference food and sleep made. I woke after an hour with a new and improved fix that allowed me to sail close-hauled again and get back in the race!

Yolande: Sunday was clearly a day of ups and downs for Prairie Gold – literally and figuratively. High winds made for choppy seas, so Phil couldn't get much rest or much to eat and was getting very wet. The fix he'd made on the genoa car broke and the wind direction didn't change to help his course when expected, so when I spoke to him early in the day he was clearly dispirited and focused mainly on just getting to Bermuda in one piece; however, a snack and a nap refreshed him. Even the wind cooperated, turning enough to allow him to set his sails, modify his course and pick up some speed, and by the time he called in that evening, he sounded positively perky and was gaining on the vessel Team Wichard, which had passed him when he was struggling earlier in the day.

Approaching the Finish Line – But Not Out of Trouble It was the last day of the solo leg and I was resting in the saloon. Because of the high winds I had furlled my genoa down to 50% but suddenly I heard it unfurl –the furling line had chafed and broken. By then the winds had grown, gusting to 35kts, the seas were reported to be 10-15 feet and I had a 150% genoa that I couldn't reef. I had two options: figure out a solution, and fast, or drop sail and motor to the finish. There was no way that I was going to do the latter. I furlled in the mainsail and, using the genoa alone, pinched so that only 50% of the sail was really catching the wind. It slowed me down, but at least I was able to sail. I couldn't make the one tack to the finish line that I'd planned, but tacked back and forth to the end.

As I crossed the line I had tears in my eyes at the accomplishment, but my troubles still weren't over. Winds were still high, I still had a 150% genoa that I couldn't furl, and nobody in Bermuda could help me because I hadn't cleared customs and immigration. I sat down, took a few deep breaths and tried to think through the problem. The only way to get myself out of the situation was to drop the genoa under these challenging conditions, but the halyard clutch was in the cockpit and I needed to be on the bow. And I'd have to do it quickly. I took the halyard from the cockpit up to the bow and remotely opened the halyard clamp. Success! The sail dropped and I managed to scoop it onto the deck and tie it off.

Yolande: Back in Boston we expected Phil to finish at about 11:30 on Monday morning, and I went to meet our daughter so we could take Phil's call together. 11:30 came and went and there was still no word. The Bermuda 1-2 website and app were limited help as they updated only every hour, and even then there were glitches at times. An update at 12:03 showed that Prairie Gold was still 0.9 nautical miles from the finish. Where was Phil? Lunchtime came and went and eventually the 1:00pm update showed that Phil's epic journey was complete! And so we waited for the call. And waited. And waited. When he eventually called we learned about the genoa.

Bermuda I arrived in Bermuda on June 7 and, as the return leg wasn't scheduled to begin until June 15, I had several days of R, R & R (rest, recuperation and rum). The St. George's Dinghy & Yacht Club had organized several events where I learned from skippers who had sailed the Bermuda 1-2 many times that these had been the most testing conditions they'd



ever faced. Several boats had had to return to Newport, others were forced to retire from the race, limping into Bermuda under engine power, and one skipper had even had to abandon his vessel. No wonder I'd had problems! I also learned that I'd come fourth in my class on the solo leg, which was not only encouraging, it was emboldening!

Once my partner Rudy for the return trip arrived, we made necessary fixes (including installing a mechanism to prevent chafing on the furling line) and provisioned the vessel. It turns out that, while alcohol is plentiful, getting water in Bermuda is not so easy!

Yolande: Rudy was heading down to Bermuda on Sunday to be ready to sail on Thursday, so I hurried to purchase about 100 feet of furling line and a new laptop, onto which I loaded wind and routing software. Phil had called Garhauer, the manufacturer of Prairie Gold's genoa cars, and the president himself had got back to him to apologize for the equipment failure with a promise to send replacements to me via overnight shipment. Once those arrived I hauled everything over to Rudy's home for him to deliver to Bermuda – surely he didn't need to pack much else?

The Double-Handed Leg By the start of the double-handed leg of the race my goal had changed: no longer content to merely finish, I wanted some hardware. Luckily Rudy is an experienced and daring sailor, so he was up for the challenge. And the weather cooperated, with following winds allowing the two of us to fly our spinnaker for hours at a time. For three days we played cat and mouse with Aggressive, who'd beaten me on the way down, flying our spinnaker through the night to make good time. In fact, on the last day we pushed so hard that we blew the spinnaker to shreds – luckily it was the old spinnaker, as I was under strict instructions to bring our new spinnaker back in one piece! During the last 50nm the wind came up, the sea state became confused, and there were some storms in the area, but we pushed on and crossed the finish line at 1:58am after four and a half days at sea. We were exhausted, but jubilant when we learned that we had come third in our class both for the double-handed leg and overall!

So what did I gain from this experience, apart from some great hardware? I know more than ever that extensive preparation is essential but that the unexpected will still happen. I've learned how much I can push my boat. And I've gained much greater confidence in myself as a sailor. The most frequent question I get about the endeavor is: "Would you do it again?" And of course I answer: "I can and I will!"



Commodore's Report

A Season Recap

by Alexander Papps

It's hard to believe that we have already finished the CYC Summer Racing Series and have begun the Fall Series. The weather has been mostly favorable this season except for a few thunderstorms rolling through, causing us to cancel two Wednesday night races during the summer series.

Our healthy Wednesday turnout is a good sign, considering sailing in general has experienced an overall decline in participation over the past five years or so. At CYC we feel it is vital to support the next generation of sailors, so we encourage everyone to get their families involved and welcome young participants in our Wednesday Night Series and other events. To further help the youth development in sailing, this year the CYC decided to support the Courageous Sailing Center by offering a charitable donation of \$1000. We hope this helps to continue building on our strong relationship with Courageous, as the center provides race committee for CYC events and many boats from Courageous also participate in our races.

2017 has shown again how extremely competitive Constitution Yacht Club racers are. Our Wednesday Night racing is often exciting enough, but our members also routinely perform exceptionally well in major races, often placing well up the leader board. At the Figawi race Peningo finished 1st in Division A, Agora was 2nd in Division B, Tonga earned 5th in Division C, and Pressure Drop earned 5th in Division E with these four top finishers earning us the team cup. In the Bermuda 1-2 Toothface 2 finished 1st in Line Honors and 1st in Class 1, and Prairie Gold finished 3rd in Class 3. In the EYC Annual Regatta Scheherazade was 1st in Fleet A and Rockit 2.0 was 1st in Fleet B. At the SS Crocker Race, Pressure Drop finished 1st in A Fleet. The Beringer Bowl was flush with CYC top finishers: in the B Fleet, Rockit 2.0 finished 1st, Up roar finished 3rd and Agora finished 4th while in the double-handed division Prairie Gold finished 1st. That same weekend Sparkle Pony and Pressure Drop stuck out excruciatingly low winds at the Round the Island race at Martha's Vineyard to place first and second in their respective divisions (rumor has it that winds were so low that one or more members of Sparkle Pony's crew took time for a quick swim during the race). In the Make-A-Wish race sponsored by CPYC, Sparkle Pony again took 1st place and Agora 3rd place in the spinnaker class. More recently CYC Members finished in the top two spots in three classes in the Flip Flop Regatta! Rockit 2.0 and Pressure Drop finished 1st and 2nd in the A Fleet, Agora and Sparkle Pony finished 1st and 2nd in the B Fleet, Tonga and Prairie Gold finished 1st and 2nd in the C Fleet. Meanwhile, at the Ted Hood Regatta Scherherazade took home the first place trophy in Class 1, Rockit 2.0 third place in Class 2, and Prairie Gold third place in the overnight double-handed race.

In addition to a great racing season CYC has been successful in accomplishing its social goals. During the winter we had some outstanding education seminars at The Living Room and during the sailing season we have had some fun end of series parties at Blackmoor, packing the bar at our last event!

What's to come? We have many more races to go, including the Boston Light Race on September 30. This event is co-sponsored by CYC along with the Savin Hill Yacht Club. Participants last year loved this new race: because it can be raced in different directions, it's an intriguing challenge of navigation as well as racing skills. Our next end of series party will be held on September 27th at the Blackmoor with appetizers provided and a cash bar.

On behalf of the Board I want to thank all members of the Constitution Yacht Club for your continued participation and enthusiasm. We also want to thank our sponsors - Mass Bay Counseling, Newbury Comics, Latitude Architects, and Blackmoor Bar and Kitchen – and encourage you to support them; along with you, they help make our great club possible.

Sailing Tip

Changing Spinnaker Lines to a New Side

by Ed Marcus

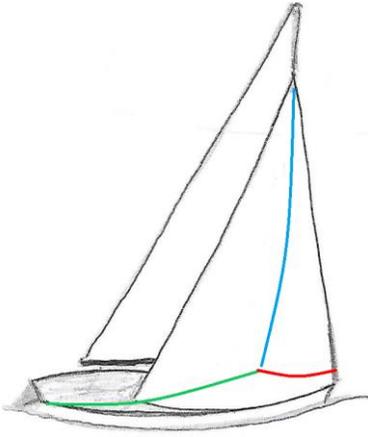


Illustration by Ed Marcus

On the race course with a variety of different downwind angles, it is common to approach the weather mark with spinnaker sheets needing to be moved to the other side of the boat. To get the spin sheets connected to a new side before the next set without having to walk them around, simply remove the sheet's connections from the spinnaker, attach them to one another, and along with the halyard pull the assembly around the forestay. This maneuver is great because it can all be done from the cockpit.

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The CYC Board is currently lining up presenters for the 2018 Winter Educational Seminars. We are eager to offer seminars of interest to as many members as possible, so would love to hear your ideas for presenters and/or topics. Please contact Education Committee Chairs Phil and Yolande Haydon (phaydon@cycboston.org or yhaydon@cycboston.org) or any CYC Board member with your suggestions.