

## Race Report

Day Race 1 Jun 5 2011

Only 3 boats turned up for this race on a drizzly grey morning with a good F3-4 N.E. breeze.

Laughing Roger in his J Rider with new member Bryn crewing and Big Brian and his crew member in his pretty Mirage Cantata. Myself alone in Hoopoe

The course was set by the O.D. (with Roger's very capable and insistent assistance!)

Division one boats were to follow

Club line start

E.W. Grounds (S)

Mid Holms (S)

Gore (S) (Just off Hinkley point power station)

West Culver (S) (Mid channel off Watchet)

Breaksea (S) (2miles offshore between Aberthaw and Barry, used to be a lightship 25 years ago!)

Merkur (S) (Port can off Barry)

Mid Holms (P)

Club line finish

Everyone was a little late getting to their boats, and 2 mins after the proposed 11.00 start I had only just got my sails up (No. 1 and full main). Looking around I found that not only was there no one else to be seen, but no flags at all flying on the Race hut mast. Assuming that the start had thus been made I headed off on a port run toward the Docks entrance thinking that this race was mine for the winning. After 5 mins having hailed Brian who was stuck on his mooring tangled up in rather large flotsam but seeing no one else on the river, I thought I would radio in to race control to see what was happening. Batteries flat on hand held! Had to go below to use main set which meant setting up the auto helm first. Eventually I got through to Chris Harris O.D. who explained that the race start had not been initiated, but that he hadn't a "postponed" flag to fly. As by now it was 11.15, but I could see that Roger was now approaching start line, I tacked about and battled back up river against wind and tide to the start line. Roger was keen to start on a 3 2 1 count, but the race office was now active, and a "Recall" flag flying, so we waited for an official start at 11.25. By dint of some tacking at the start line, Roger found himself on the wrong side at the start, and I had first advantage. The breeze was fairly strong and just behind the port quarter at this stage but I didn't really want to fly a spinnaker alone, but when Roger started to break out his lines, I knew that I was going to have to too! I managed to fly mine by the time we got to the dock entrance and made some more distance on Roger, but coming up to windward to clear the mudflats I had to take it down again and repack it, while Roger taking a more windward route down the main river channel had gained distance ahead of me but in the wrong direction. 10 mins later I could see why, as he hoisted his spinnaker while I was still clearing the mudflats to windward. I was still a couple of hundred yards ahead though and managed to get the spinnaker back up before he overtook me. Battle then commenced toward Newport deep and on to the EW with Roger gradually gaining ground and rounding

EW(only just with the tide running hard) ahead by a boats length having overtaken me planing!

After E.W. Roger took a route toward Flat holm to enable him to sail with wind over starboard quarter, while I opted for the dead run toward Steep Holm. We separated by half a mile and I seemed to gain ground in the correct direction. Roger however came screaming back toward Steep Holm with wind on his port quarter and we were neck for neck rounding Steep Holm where we needed to drop the spinnakers in very gusty conditions as the wind funnelled around the island, mine by the simple expedient of dumping it all in the water and recovering under the rail and very wet. I did however get back on course for Gore more quickly than Roger and gained 100 yards on him. On a broad reach to Gore Roger was catching me slowly again, but fortunately in the wrong direction again as he made for one of the Yellow Target buoys which proliferate in that stretch of water. By the time he had thoroughly investigated that buoy and found it to be yellow rather than the expected RED/WHITE I had recovered the lead around the Gore by a hundred yards.

Now one of the things that Roger and I agree on is that electronic guidance has no part in racing, so we both headed off blind to where we thought West Culver might be. Roger taking the high road mid channel, me taking the low road slightly more inshore, Roger right, me wrong and at West Culver Roger had pulled out a respectable lead of perhaps a quarter mile which he was to hold on to for the rest of the day. This leg of the race was a starboard run, and after the West Culver we had to harden up for the start of the fetch home.

At this stage of our race we were aware of a few other boats apparently racing the opposite direction wise to us and using the West Culver as a mark.

With tide now slack getting the course right for Breaksea, visible now in the distance in the first watery sunshine of the day, was easy and I think that I gained some ground on Roger. From Breaksea we hardened up further and started the long battle to Merkur and the Holms. Roger opted for more tacks than me to make the Merkur, but after that the wind veered a little and we were both able to make good a port hand course for the Holms, Roger seeming to gain a little ground at this point, especially as I nearly forgot the Mid Holms and also had to make a significant course correction to avoid running down the Sandpiper making her way back to Newport. After the Mid Holms the wind was dead on the nose to Newport and we both opted for tacking mid channel with the rising tide, once again seeing another fleet of boats making generally the same direction as us but keeping more to the English side.

Roger kept the advantage most of the way to Newport until he put in one long tack over the North end of Cardiff grounds and lost some distance. I think that I judged my final tack into the channel quite well and gained a little more ground, Finishing the race 5 minutes behind the J Rider at about 7.40 pm.

A long, occasionally wet day, with NO TEA, but at the end of it a feeling of accomplishment. We both had a great day out in weather conditions which perhaps suited my boat better than Rogers.

If any one out there would like to sail with me or another on one of these races, my mobile no. is 07814 934962, or just turn up on race days and find me or any other sailing member. You would be almost certain to find someone willing to take you.

Chris Roberts.