

THE BIG WIND THAT NEVER WAS

Domenico De Sole & Associates Cup

Harbor 20 Spring Regatta

May 21 – 23, 2010

The Calibogue Sound off Windmill Harbor on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, is known for its excellent sailing conditions. The Harbor 20 sailors in Fleet 3 almost always sail in winds in the 10 – 12 knot range and rarely experience the light and fluky conditions that drive us all crazy. However, they do have big tides to contend with!

This year's Domenico De Sole & Associates Regatta included a seminar on Friday morning presented by Tom Schock. Knowing that the conditions would probably be relatively windy, Tom focused his seminar on how to – and how not to – sail the Harbor 20 in windy conditions. Since a picture is worth a thousand words, Tom illustrated his tips by showing photos taken during this year's Southern California Midwinter Regatta, which was sailed in much stronger winds than the Newport Beach Harbor 20 sailors usually see. The photos clearly show how important it is to set the boat up correctly, move the crew weight aft, and play the main.

After the seminar, everyone took a lunch break and then headed out through the locks for a beautiful afternoon on the water. South Carolina Yacht Club Yachting Director, Dave Wilson, fired off five practice races on short courses, which gave us an excellent opportunity to practice our starts. The wind was out of the Southeast, which put the breeze at right angles to the flooding tide and the starting line practically parallel to the current. You wanted to get onto port tack as soon as possible to get upwind of the current. And the right side of the course definitely paid off. After a couple of races, a port tack lift put the boats on the left in a position to lee bow the current and go high and fast to the mark.

The shifty winds and fast moving current made for really challenging sailing. The current was strong enough that you had to respect it, but you still had to watch the shifts and respond accordingly.

Tom's Tips for Sailing in 10 Knots Plus

Mainsail Trim – Tighten the outhaul so the foot is snug up to the boom. Tighten the cunningham to eliminate the scallops in the luff of the main. Get the backstay as tight as you can. Get the boom vang as tight as you can. And keep the traveler centered. This trim flattens the main with a nice even bend in the mast – the vang pressure pushes the boom into the mast, making the mast bend below the spreaders. Keeping the traveler centered and the vang tight holds the boom down firmly but allows the outboard tip of the boom to rise in a puff. The leech opens at the top and allows energy to bleed off at the top, which reduces the heeling moment and helps prevent the boat from rounding up in a puff.

Jib Trim – Get the jib as close as possible to the top of the foil. Tighten the downhaul to pull the draft forward and flatten the jib. Be sure the outhaul is tight and that it is in the hole in the clew that pulls downward enough to keep the leech from opening too much.

Crew Placement – The skipper and crew should sit further aft than in light air, and they should sit tight together. With three people onboard, one should sit aft of the skipper. Going downwind, heel the boat slightly to weather to increase the amount of sail area exposed to the wind.

Trimming for Speed – The goal in heavy air is to keep the boat at a constant heel angle. In puffy conditions, playing the main is critical. Let the main out in puffs, and pull it back in during lulls.

On Saturday, the wind clocked more Southeast and never got above 8 knots, so we had a whole new ballgame; and all of Tom's advice regarding sailing in heavy air was for naught. Instead of tightening the sail control lines, we were loosening them. Instead of sitting aft, we were moving forward. And boat handling wasn't nearly as critical as good racing tactics.

PRO Jim Vaughn of Harbour Town Yacht Club had no choice but to set the starting line at right angles to the current, with the weather mark directly up current. The Big Question was whether to sail on the left side of the course or on the right. Going up the middle wasn't an option because there was even less breeze, and tons of current. Add shallow water on both sides, and the excitement begins.

In the first race Peter Brower and his son got off to a great start and covered Tom Schock while staying as tight to the right shore as possible. Southern hospitality being what it is, Peter's boat bumped the mud, not only telling Tom where the shallows were, but also letting him play through. This definitely set the challenge for the day – How far to the right do we dare to go? And how far into the current? At certain times, the boats out on the port side got huge lifts and started lee bowing the current. They made big gains, but if a header came through, they got flushed pretty quickly.

Race two saw the leeward end of the starting line heavily favored. Tom Schock failed to execute a port tack start and ended up way back in the fleet. Wiley and Amy Pollard, who had trailered their boat from Shreveport, Louisiana, finished first, with Tom Webster and Connor Brady close behind to finish second and third. Tom Schock was back on his game in the third race and finished first. Peter Brower was second and Burt Keenan was third.

In the fourth race, Connor Brady got off to a great start, with Tom Schock in hot pursuit. As they fought it out on the right side, Wiley Pollard found a great left hand shift on the other side of the course, and it looked like he was going to wallop everyone. Wiley was up a good 30 degrees, but so were Connor, Tom, and Paul Miller and the rest of the fleet on the right side. The two groups were converging on separate tacks with very little difference in angle. Wiley was within 25 yards of the



*Excellent heel angle.
Good crew placement.*



Too much heel.



*Really fast!
(Note that the crew is trimming the main so the skipper can concentrate on the jib.)*



*Really slow!
(Jim is turning around the mark with the tiller clear to weather. The rudder isn't steering any more – it is just stopping the boat.)*

mark when his big port tack lift collapsed. Tom lead to the finish, Paul was second, Wiley was third, and Don Buchanan was fourth.



Regatta winner Tom Schock and Domenico De Sole.

After two more races, we were treated to a fabulous dinner party at the home of Domenico and Eleanor De Sole. Another highlight of the regatta was the use of Kattack, a wireless technology that tracks the boats throughout the race. Ned Nielsen made arrangements with Kattack's Chris Fortin to equip each boat with a pre-programmed GPS that recorded the movements of the boats on a web-based software application. The spectators were able to watch the races in real time. And after the racing, the data was replayed so the racers could see their cool and not-so-cool moves. The data is amazing and offers a terrific opportunity to analyze the races. To see the results, go to www.kattack.com, log in by setting up a user name and a password, and then select "download web player" (this takes less than a minute). Then click on the Domenico DeSole Regatta. It is truly fascinating.

On Sunday all twelve boats passed through the locks at about 9:30 to avoid the lowest tide. Unfortunately, there was absolutely no wind on the Sound. At 12 noon the races were called, so Saturday's standings became the final results for the regatta. Special thanks to the Pollards for coming out from Shreveport and to the Seeses for towing their boat up from Savannah.

Results:

Boat #	Skipper	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Race 6	Total
277	Tom Schock	1	8*	1	1	3	1	7
124	Wiley Pollard	6*	1	4	3	2	4	14
280	Peter Brower	2	5	2	10*	1	5	15
279	Connor Brady	5	4	8*	5	7	2	23
96	Gary Gleason	4	9*	5	7	4	3	23
223	Domenico De Sole	3	2	6	9*	5	8	24
141	Tom Webster	7	3	7	8*	6	6	29
235	Paul Miller	9	6	11*	2	9	11	37
101	Gebel Seese	8	11*	10	6	8	9	41
185	Don Buchanan	10*	10	9	4	10	10	43
241	Burt Keenan	13	7	3	11	13	12	46
		DSQ*				DSQ		
278	Richard Schulze	11	12*	12	12	11	7	53

*One throwout shown by **