

The Daily Mail British International Harmsworth Trophy *As seen by Dave Deacon in Hot Lemon*

Entrants

Buzzi Bullet	10m Buzzi Drew Langdon, Jan Falkowski.	(RIB)	2x200 hp Merc outboards
Eraser 2	Buzzi Tecno 40 Andy Macateer, Paul Lemmer, Andy Sutcliffe, Nick Wilner.	(RIB)	2x 750 hp Seatek diesels
Hot Lemon	10m Scorpion Sports Cruiser Dave Deacon, Mike Deacon.	(RIB)	2x320 hp Yanmar diesels
Ocean Dragon	9m Revenger Martin Lai, James Putland.	(RIB)	2x 200 hp Merc outboards
Premier Crew	13m Cougar Earl of Normanton, Chris Allenby, David Allenby, Jo Donohoo	(Hard hull)	2x1000 hp V8 Chevy petrol
Seahound V	10m Scorpion Sports Cruiser Chris Strickland, Debbie Pemberton.	(RIB)	2x 320 hp Yanmar diesels
Silent Mistress	10m Sportsboat Richard Bendy, Ashley Nihell, Stephen Reynolds, Frank Rose.	(Hard hull)	2x 400hp straight 6 petrols
Wettpunkt.com	15m Buzzi Hannes Bohinc, Anselmo Mauri, Miles Jennings, Ed Williams-Hawkes.	(Hard hull)	2x850 hp Seatek diesels

Safety fleet: *These events simply could not take place without the ability, enthusiasm and dedication of the Safety fleet to whom all competitors say "Thank you very much". There were over 80 safety boats signed on and of which almost 30 were BIBOA members.*

HEAT 1...Sunday 17th August 2003

The magnificent solid bronze Harmsworth trophy, first presented in 1903 by Sir Alfred Harmsworth the proprietor of the Daily Mail, was intended to encourage the development of the motorboat and has become the powerboating equivalent of the America's Cup. The inaugural race was held in Cork over an 8.5 mile course and speeds were around 12 knots or so, a far cry from the 80 knots of some present competitors; engines have also improved from the 24hp used then - to the 2000hp used by The Earl of Normanton in Premier Crew.

Poole was selected as the venue for the first Heat and the date would lead nicely onto the Cowes Classic the following weekend; owing to adverse conditions on Saturday the National races were postponed to Sunday so we spent Saturday afternoon checking and re-checking the boat and fuel load in preparation for 112nm of hard racing.

Saturday evening became more surreal as it went on, culminating in Paul Lemmer organising a group outing to Asda for the Eraser 2 team and then finding somewhere for them all to stay! I was glad that Andy Macateer the owner of Eraser 2 crashed out in my room, had his mobile not rung at 7.30am, the chances of my waking up would have been fairly marginal to say the least! Still, all that aside and after a quiet talk with myself, Dad and I left the marina at 11am, made our way out to the start and milled gently around in the muster area to save fuel.

Time crept by and we were quite relaxed until we heard radio reports of "two metre seas" at the Needles turn mark - I think we would rather not have known! Still, all of a sudden we saw the yellow flag go up and the very quick start boat Formula 1 turned to run towards the start line at the end of Bournemouth Pier. This was one of the fastest starts we had ever taken part in, I think the idea was to make it easier for the larger boats to have a good clean start and we were already approaching 50knots when the green flag went up! Although we had a very good start, it didn't take more than a few boat lengths for Wettpunkt.com to come past, followed by Eraser 2 with Buzzi Bullet in hot pursuit!

The first leg to Boscombe pier was too smooth for both Hot Lemon and Seahound and we were both soon overtaken by Ocean Dragon and Premier Crew. We were surprised not also to be passed by Silent Mistress who later turned out to have blown an engine at Boscombe Pier! Shortly after starting the leg out to the Needles we came across a stationary Buzzi Bullet, Drew and Jan gave us a thumbs up and we assumed they were okay; upon reflection, they may have been trying to thumb a lift... I never can tell!

The run out to the Needles mark involved a good 4 foot swell on the nose and I was determined to catch the two who had crept past. Slowly, slowly we caught and passed Premier Crew and, from astern, we were deafened by the thunder of 2000hp of V8 muscle. In these boisterous conditions we imagined we would pull away from Ocean Dragon and Seahound but they were having none of it and despite our best efforts we just couldn't shake them off; we eventually just eased past Ocean Dragon on the way out to Needles Fairway but we now had a growing following sea to contend with and sister boat Seahound on our transom.

As the seas were growing by the mile it was a bit off-putting to see the GPS showing 18 miles to the DZ mark off St Albans Head. Although we were running neck and neck with Ocean Dragon at some 40 knots in 2 metre following seas we noticed that Seahound had decided discretion was the better part of valour and had (very sensibly) eased back, expecting to pass us when we broke ourselves or the boat! Concern set in when the longer and much more powerful Premier Crew edged past as we approached St Albans, we were also amazed to see Eraser 2 and Wettpunkt.com in the distance, albeit, fast disappearing toward the horizon!

St Albans and the run down to The Shambles mark held a few nasty surprises but although there were sheets of green water coming over the windscreen we didn't actually stuff the bow; at times we couldn't see Ocean Dragon alongside us but could hear their engines barking madly -we were down to 35knots at one point and that was driving on the limit!

As we approached The Shambles mark conditions calmed down, Ocean Dragon was about 50 feet in front of us with Premier Crew about a mile further ahead. We could see the two leaders were well on their way back to Bournemouth and were literally neck and neck - very spectacular in the conditions!

I was determined to pass Ocean Dragon and squeaked past on the inside as we turned at The Shambles; who knows how close we came to each other but somehow we both made it round without incident. We were now running back straight into a four foot breaking swell and with lots of trim we were able to build a lead over Ocean Dragon and were ever so slowly closing on Premier Crew.

As we approached St Albans we elected to use our local knowledge and run extremely close inshore to find smoother water; the plan paid off and we were now side by side with the V8 muscle boat, 2000hp versus 640hp. **This was the start of the most thrilling leg I have ever helmed**, a tremendous battle, the boats were inseparable as we rounded St Albans each of us only about 30 feet off the towering cliffs praying our calculation of depth was correct. The run from there to Anvil Point and onwards to the Dorset Yacht/Wytch Farm mark in Bournemouth Bay was fantastic. We were playing with the trim all the time; first, they would find a knot and pull ahead, then we would get the trim right and edge past again! An awkward wave would throw us to one side at 50 knots and I would try to recall the advert line "...it doesn't even hurt in a Scorpion...!" Trying to find the Dorset Yacht mark was tricky and each boat adopted a quite different course; fortunately, Dad navigator came up trumps and although we found it first it didn't take long for Premier Crew to turn and join us at the mark, although I must confess to edging them out rather forcibly. We later discovered their

navigator had a severe problem involving loss of both visor and glasses, well done in the conditions!

As we expected, they pulled ahead in the smoother water past the piers and by the time we were heading for the Needles again they had quite a lead on us. The conditions had deteriorated by now and there were some spectacularly large holes to avoid. By the time we reached the Needles we had caught them again and as we set off on the run to the DZ mark off St Albans we were again side by side, running down wind in 6 or 7 foot seas. I found myself wishing in a sense that we were either ahead or behind Premier Crew as we would then perhaps have been able to back off slightly; as it was, we were alongside them and pushing as hard as the conditions would allow.

My biggest concern now was just how low the fuel levels were getting, we were down to one green light on the port tank and flashing one/two red on the starboard tank...almost dry. A quick calculation showed we had some 36 miles left to run...18 gallons were needed, 9 from each tank. We decided to carry on at full speed and work on the basis that either we would finish, or we wouldn't! As we now headed to St Albans for the second time we saw the two leading boats on their return leg - still absolutely side by side, a thrilling sight.

Approaching St Albans the conditions deteriorated enough to allow us to once again edge ahead of Premier Crew and make the turn first. We then ran north to the next mark and it was a handful to run fast across these seas, Hot Lemon was now very feisty with almost no fuel in her tanks.

As we turned East again we were heading into fairly sizeable seas and were down to 40 knots or so in clouds of spray; although we very slowly pulled away from our muscle boat adversary, they had other ideas...we elected to use the excellent seakeeping of the Scorpion hull and push hard straight through St Albans race, as they couldn't hold us in rough water they elected to close the shore and run in smoother water.

Off St Albans point, I was feeling absolutely shattered and half asleep, at which point Dad uttered an instruction I haven't heard him use for a long time, along the lines of 'drive as hard as we can survive'. We had by now been re-joined by the helicopter filming the race for Sky TV (Sept 20th and 21st) and it must have looked incredible for us to be one or two seconds apart after 100 miles plus of racing. A quick check over my left shoulder revealed that their plan had worked and they were closing rapidly - we decided it would be all or nothing...trim tabs up... legs up...throttles on the stops...here we go...

It was tremendous as both boats rose on top of the seas and we flew across the crests at 54 knots.

I gently edged towards the cliffs at Anvil Point to try and shut them out at the next mark (a trick learned from go-kart racing), we each passed close enough to the cliffs to reach out and touch them. As we approached Peverill Ledge we did something we've never done before and cut in as close as we dared to the ledge on the basis that "either there is enough water or there'll be a monumental bang, followed by lots of swimming!"

It really was a race to the end now and we were right on the edge - to her credit, all 4 tonnes of Hot Lemon were flying and we were seeing speeds well over 50knots in a standard cruising boat having two berths, a toilet, cooker, heater and a full galley with sink and Corian worktops!

There was literally nothing separating us as we approached Dorset Yacht mark, my plan of closing the mark and forcing them out round the long way helped slightly - but as the seas calmed they had the legs on us as we ran down toward our final mark. As we started to make the turn we knew it was all over as we couldn't catch them in the smooth water - disappointing, yes, but after 112 nautical miles of brilliant racing, we consoled ourselves in the knowledge that we'd been beaten by about 10 seconds to a boat having nearly three times our horsepower!

On refuelling at the floating barge in Poole Harbour, we laughed when realising we only had 10miles of fuel left- a bit close for comfort, but at least we now know how low we can run it!

In all it was a tremendous race, the leaders had been scrapping for first and second place and we had enjoyed an incredible battle for third/fourth place. I don't think any of us escaped unscathed, my hands were covered in cuts and blisters and I'm about 2 inches shorter than I was. One of the best stories came from Eraser 2, their GPS had jumped out of the dashboard and caught helmsman Andy square on the jaw, apparently it cost him first place! The 15m, 1700 hp Wettpunkt.com had also sustained substantial damage to the hull - perhaps that's the best indicator as to how bad the conditions were, we felt pleased that Hot Lemon and we were still in one piece!

The final results...

Wettpunkt.com 1st,
Eraser 2 was 2nd by a few seconds,
Premier Crew 3rd,
Hot Lemon 4th and
Seahound 5th, these last two craft being standard "off the shelf" cruising RIBs

I should explain that Ocean Dragon had very sportingly asked to run although he could not collect points as he was under length, a superb effort by Martin and James, both BIBOA members.

We now had until Thursday to recover before Heat 2 of the **Daily Mail British International Harmsworth Trophy** - two laps of the Isle of Wight totalling another 121nm - I think plenty of Redbull will be needed if the conditions are to be similar to Heat 1. For now, it's all still up for grabs and, come Thursday, Hot Lemon will be back out there giving it her all.... watch this space!

Dave Deacon...*Hot Lemon*