

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

HEATS 3 and 4...Saturday 23rd August 2003

As Friday was a lay day, Dad ran Hot Lemon back to Lymington to collect Mum and have the boat checked over by Scorpion Ribs (SR) and Dave Crawford Marine (DCM) before we ran the 250nm race Cowes-Torquay-Cowes on Saturday. Due to the severity of my hangover I elected to pass on this outing and stay safely ashore. Some weeks beforehand we had noticed a small amount of oil starting to accumulate in the bilge and we took this opportunity to have DCM inspect; great concern when a look under the engine with a mirror revealed what appeared to be a hairline crack in the block. Dad and I decided to run anyway as the worst outcome would be that we would have to slow down and re-fill the engine with oil or that the block would fail completely and the engine would fall into the bilge - in the event, neither happened (fortunately!).

HEAT 3 *Cowes to Torquay*

This Heat would run alongside Legs 1 and 2 of the RIB World Cup and be the RYA National Championship race on the Cowes-Torquay leg, we therefore decided it would be better to take it easy than to risk breaking the engine completely. I was amazed to find myself aboard the boat at 06.45 Saturday morning, doing the usual engine and drive checks - good for peace of mind and mechanical familiarisation. Following a much-needed full fry-up I made my way to rendezvous with Dad and head to the 08.00 briefing. This took rather longer than anticipated and tension was certainly rising once we were finally released. Dad and I began our usual fuel debate: he prefers having more than enough, I prefer running on fumes, we eventually agreed to run the 110nm first leg with the 60 gallons we already had in our tanks.

Start time was 10:00 and all boats were out well ahead of time. Tony Jenvey and Neil McGregor had arrived in Liberty, the Revenger which had recently claimed the up to 30ft 'Round Britain Record' previously set by Dad, Chris Strickland & Jan Falkowski in Hot Lemon 3. We knew it would be an interesting run as Liberty has identical engines to Hot Lemon in a boat that is wider but shorter and approx 1000kg lighter. The Red Jet start boat soon raised the yellow flag and we began the start run. There were around 25 boats at the line and, as always, it was a fantastic sight. The start was a great sensation as recent races have split our RIB classes with far fewer boats in each start; it was great to be back with the full RIB fleet.

The green flag was quickly raised and we were away, we had a great run down to West Lepe with 7 or 8 other boats and Liberty just a few feet in front of us. There was no way we were backing off on the mark and it must have been a spectacular sight for the mark boat as the fleet rounded the mark together and set off for North East Gurnard mark. It was a tribute to the skill of the drivers that we all managed the turn without incident!

Once we had completed the circuit off Cowes we started the long run to Torquay. We were enjoying a great battle with Windexe (R4) Ribellion (R13) and Maverick (R3) as we set off toward the Needles but were disappointed to see that Liberty had about a knot on us and was gently easing out of reach; however, with Seahound right on our transom we knew we couldn't make any mistakes! As we reached the end of the Solent, the conditions flattened off enough to allow the three much lighter Formula 2 boats to ease ahead but as we passed Hurst the sea became quite sloppy and we were soon alongside them again. Sadly it was here that Windexe encountered problems and stopped, we checked there were no frantic signals as we passed and set off in pursuit of Ribellion and Maverick.

The considerable extra weight of Hot Lemon meant we able to overhaul both in the sloppy conditions across Poole Bay, although neither made it easy and with every landing we

cringed at the thought of what was happening to our sick engine! As we reached St Albans we could see that Comfortably Numb (R22) and Dragon's Revenge (R6) were still within reach should the conditions get any worse, sadly this was not to be and they were still pulling away - averaging just over 1 knot more than us. We were sorry to pass Martin & James in Ocean Dragon (R8), it seemed mechanical gremlins had struck and they had lost an engine.

The rest of the run to Torquay was fairly fortunately uneventful although the Portland Race offered the occasional trench to catch the unwary, despite our problems we had a great tussle with Maverick much of the way across Lyme Bay. Halfway across we looked back and saw a RIB approaching fast, we thought perhaps Ocean Dragon had recovered but, as the boat neared, it turned out to be Exe-Calibur (R19) and the boat looked great as they passed us and set off in hot pursuit of their next victim.

All credit must go to them, they came from a long way behind us to win Formula 2 by 9 seconds in the last 30 miles or so! The sea just kept getting calmer in the last 10 miles or so, this allowed Ribellion to catch and pass us and they came within 3 seconds of beating Maverick across the line- spectacularly close racing after more than 100 nm miles racing.

Once we entered harbour I set off to find some sustenance and eventually settled for fish & chips and a chance to sit down - the racing had been close, the four Formula 1 RIBs had all averaged over 60 knots with only 11 seconds separating the first three, Bridge Motorcycles, Wilson Bowden Admirals Quay and Apricot Print; the calm conditions had meant that the leading Harmsworth competitors had arrived in Torquay some 30minutes ahead of us! Still, we reminded ourselves that because of the way the points system is worked, it wasn't over yet and every one of us, including Wettpunkt.com, needed to finish Heat 4 back to Cowes to secure their positions.

HEAT 4 Torquay to Cowes

As we had elected to run Heat 3 light on fuel, we thought it best to put a little more in to make sure we got back, unfortunately this delayed our departure by 20minutes or so, making the chances of catching anyone else on the run back very slim indeed. It's always a very lonely run back across Lyme Bay on your own and, as the conditions were relatively calm, both Dad and myself were finding it very hard to stay awake. For some reason, once the conversation dries up, I always find myself singing old cheesy tunes in my head...one day must ask psychiatrist Falkowski if this is something for which I should consider his help!? Despite the loneliness, things were made more interesting as a following swell developed and I had to concentrate more on trimming the boat. The seas were fast becoming an excellent following chop and the run across Poole Bay was lovely - coming across the wash left behind by the Seacat bound for Cherbourg certainly gave us a surprise, it doesn't leave a wash so much as mountainous waves.

Running back past North Head mark and up the Solent was great, Hot Lemon was running fantastically well and being light on fuel meant she was very lively. Maybe I imagining it, but the Solent seemed to be busier than ever and it was a real case of staying alert as we weaved our way toward North East Gurnard on our entry lap to the final circuit. We spotted Buzzi Bullet coming around the circuit and I wondered how we had managed to finish so close behind them, I was concerned they would be coming up fast behind us and when they didn't, we began to wonder what was wrong. The last two laps of the short circuit seemed to fly by and it was very hard to keep concentrating and avoid colliding with any badly placed sailing boats! "Eyes in the back, top and side of head" came to mind.

Once we finished, we were even more surprised than before when the Squadron rib again approached us and handed us the 3rd Place Union Jack. Once again we asked them what was going on and they told us that because Buzzi Bullet had encountered mechanical problems, our overall time for Heats 3 and 4 was quicker than theirs and we had therefore finished 3rd overall in the Harmsworth series! Whilst this was a tremendous feeling of

achievement for a standard boat, I have to say that we both felt very sorry for Buzzi Bullet to have 3rd place snatched from them on the last leg, but I guess that's racing and it could easily have happened to us! The final timings showed that after 445 nautical miles of racing, we had beaten them by just over three minutes, which we all agreed was fantastically close given the mixture of two very rough and two fairly calm races!

We were very proud for BIBOA that so many members were represented in the results for this prestigious event; it was even better for BIBOA when we were joined by the crew of Buzzi Bullet for them to be rewarded with 3rd place in the RYA National Endurance Championships, Hot Lemon having secured 2nd place to the Tecno 40 Eraser 2 in 1st place.

Saturday evening saw us at a black tie dinner in the Royal Yacht Squadron, which was a great opportunity to see the inside of such an old establishment. There were several other familiar faces there such as Steve Curtis and Ian Sanderson with Peter Dredge in the Sunseeker XS racing team. Once the speeches were over, it was again time to get the 'silly hat' on and head down to the beer tent in the pits, needless to say I took a fair bit of stick for turning up looking like a penguin, but it was all good fun!

A sense of elation had now set in, although as the Harmsworth series was now concluded, and after a week packed with emotional highs and lows and making some great new friends, it was hard not to feel slightly depressed. But I knew we still had Sunday to look forward to and this kept me partying all through the night!

Sunday's race (Heat 3 of the BIBOA RIB World Cup) also turned out to be great fun and we had extra crew on board in the form of Marisa Agar (Lord Normanton's daughter) and Charlotte (Charlie) Hacking from the British Powerboat Racing Club; they both seemed to enjoy the race, particularly the usual very boisterous start. Although it seemed fairly easy to be going around the Island again, the mirror smooth sea disappeared once we had rounded St Cats. A good Solent chop meant we had a fantastic time trying to catch as many Formula 2 boats as possible, culminating in a fantastic give and take battle with Ribellion over the last few miles; I think the fact we were running on diesel fumes, and a will to impress our passengers, was all that gave us the edge in the end!

In summary, this Daily Mail British International Harmsworth Trophy race was a fantastic few days of the best racing we have ever enjoyed. There has already been talk about the running of the series next year and if any of you reading this have the chance to take part - don't think twice, just get that entry in and you will have a fantastic time, as we did. Thanks for reading this and I hope you have enjoyed the insight as much as we enjoyed the event.

Dave Deacon...*Hot Lemon*