

Written by Valerie Harrison –crew of Only Time



Ross 780 mk3 – ‘Only Time’

Many a sailor has exclaimed, ‘And just how do the two of you race that?’ We never really gave it much thought as we’ve always raced with just the two of us. Whether it’s been on; off the beach skiffs, cats or smaller trailer sailers. It wasn’t until we ventured south of Sydney and raced with other Ross mk3 yachts did we realize you really need 3-4 to hold a Ross down, well upwind at least!

Anyways we do race our Ross with spinnaker (kite) and just the two of us, but with a few considerations. Brian has rigged up a very effective reefing system (we can reef in under a minute without any loss of speed). We also threw away the spinnaker pole (I refuse to set a pole anymore) and set an A-symmetrical kite instead.

Below is a ‘fun-cheeky’ race report from a NHTYA club race day. Just to give you an idea. It’s from the crew’s (me) point of view !

NHTYA Race Report;

Race 8- 24th May 2015 (A crews perspective)

It was another glorious day as usual on Lake Macquarie. Of course with a picture perfect day comes not a lot of wind- perhaps we’re in for a relaxing day?

Race Officer, Arnold, decided we would have a scratch start at 11:40am due to low numbers (5) and the possibility that the wind would drop out. Normally our, ‘Only Time’, division 3 start is some 20 mins later than everyone else (usually around 15 starters).

- Ross 780mk3 ‘Only Time’,
- Super Tramp Trimaran ‘Oranje’,
- Castle 650 ‘Windsor Castle’,
- Timpenny 670 ‘R&R’. and
- Sabre 25 ‘SailAway’.

The start line was as wide as it could possibly be, from F-Jetty to the tower on the hill, the other side of the bay. Of course, we still hugged the start line and OFF we went, straight to Fishing Point. We had to sail right through the middle of the big boy fleet, no tacks- a champagne run.

We rounded the mark giving it a wide berth to make room for the big boys using the same mark. We wanted to pop the kite without keeping an eye on their mistakes too. Also they're a bit bigger than us and we didn't want to test any race rules as they were already yelling at each other.

We popped the kite with no dramas and headed straight to Channel then on to Marks Point, no deviations a straight run. We kept Channel to starboard and Marks Point to port, threading the needle thanks to my steady helming.

Gybe around Marks Point, no fouling, no yelling and off to find Cardiff. Hmm where is it again? Is that the mark? No. It's not the one we're heading for. It's the one with the sightseers, with their tender on a long rope dancing around the mark! I'm helming to keep the kite full and to make port of the mark high enough to keep moving but low enough to get as close as we can. Higher on the gusts- faster -then duck lower to not get off course. The sightseers must have thought we couldn't steer... no problems we're fine. Up goes the Jib, Brian lays out the tack line just out of reach, un-cleats the kite halyard and hands it to me together with the kite sheet. He then scrambles forward ready to drop the kite.

Now during this time I'm an octopus, tiller between my legs steering whilst holding the kite sheet powering along and kite halyard in the other hand- bit of pressure holding tight not to let the halyard slip or we'll be prawning. I'm ready for a controlled drop of the kite whilst controlling the kite, steering to not gybe the main and stay true to the mark. Somewhere in this I have to reach forward and release the tack ! Must have looked like a sight but the sightseers got the hint and frantically pulled in their tender just as we got closer. Kite down, Brian's packing it whilst I'm rounding the mark, tightening the main just as Brian gets back to the cockpit. We swap positions and Brian trims the main whilst I trim the jib. We're off up wind and I can relax -whew – breathe !

At this moment Arnold announces over the radio; It's a shortened course and we're not going to Anderson. 'Anderson- Anderson we're we going around Anderson?' we ask each other. We look at our scribbles on the map; no no no 'we' were never going to go to Anderson- thanks Arnold.



We are now heading up wind to Coal Point- yes we'll make it- no we won't- yes we will – naagh we didn't- tack again then tack around to head up to Coon Island.

At last a chance to relax a bit now and looking back we can see Oranje and Windsor Castle battling it out swapping positions. Just behind is R&R steaming across to Coal Point looking tight and then SailAway not quite yet at Cardiff- but everyone is behind us. Back to business.

Closer to Coon Island we notice a fishing boat anchored right on the mark. They must have seen Oranje and Windsor Castle as well, thought better of it and upped anchor.... Brian hands me the helm again as he goes forward to ready the kite – I've just got to hold course then he's back in position. I round Coon let the main out and hold the kite sheet as Brian hoists the kite- I bring in the kite to not power up till he's got it up... Got it up- I let out the sheet to fill the kite, point higher, power up and Brian runs forward to drop the jib while I steer and play the kite till he gets back. I hand the kite sheet over to Brian and we're off.

It's a perfect run doing 7 knots. Looking back, YEP Windsor Castle pop their kite too. The race is serious now.

Oh No ! The lazy jacks have fouled. There's lots of pressure in the kite, too much for me to control with one hand. Brian cleats the kite sheet around the winch so he can go forward to tend to business. I've just got to steer to keep the kite full and not throw Brian overboard- hmmm tempting..NO we have to win I decide. Higher -keep it full -speed is good. @#\$% we need to be ALOT lower... no no no .. I yell at Brian to HURRY UP, I'm steering off course keeping it full. Kite is cleated on way too tight so I have to go higher than the mark. Gust hits and the kite flogs. Up, up I have to go heading further off course. I yell at Brian - Brian yells something back – not real sure what it was – something about keeping him on the boat – he he he ! All good- Brian grabs the kite sheet off of the winch, lets out and I head down, back on course and I can now flatten out the boat. Windsor Castle made good ground while we had our 'moment' but luckily didn't catch us.

We're getting closer now to Skye Point and looking to the finish line but the wind starts to drop out. Hmm it's not the best fun inside the bay with a kit and wind, never mind no wind.

Wind is now down to maybe 4 knots, just enough to hold the kite and get home- first cross the line. Some 20 minutes later and there's NO wind at all. Eventually everyone else finally gets home.

Thanks Arnold for the scratch start. Another 20 minutes waiting for our usual start and we too would have been a victim of no wind. All in all another great day and we win ☺

