

When in 1786 Captain Francis Light\* landed on Pulau Pinang (Penang) and renamed it Prince of Wales Island, little did he know that over 200 years later, the island would be invaded each year from the sea . . . to participate in the Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta.

So it was over the night of Monday, the 19th of November 2007, and the morning of Tuesday, the 20th, that 40 boats (2006: 44 boats) arrived in George Town at the end of the second leg of this tactically challenging regatta.

The fleet this year was split into six classes. As always there was considerable debate about classifications and, with some juggling, the two catamarans, *Out of the Box* and *Merpati Putih*, found themselves regrouped with the two classics *Eveline* and *Sirius 1935*.

Similarly, with motoring allowed in Classes 5 and 6, there was much murmuring over the accuracy of certain participating boats' declarations. It would be a shame to think that not all participants may have been 'honourable'. With no evidence to prove otherwise, allegations remain only hearsay . . .

Three of the five boats — *Fortis Mandrake*, *Strewth* and *Walawala* — that left Hong Kong on the 25th of October on the Hainan Race joined the Regatta along with *Jelik*, *Microlab Moonlight Shadow* and *Quantum Racing*, which had participated in the China Cup.

While there was no Malaysian youth team this year, a number of young sailors were assigned to crew on other boats including brother and sister Ng Ai Li (19) and Ng Heng Li (18) who joined Ray Roberts and team on *Quantum Racing*.

Commenting afterwards they were thrilled with the experience, especially being on the winning boat.

While organisers and sponsors normally like to attract the fast boats and rock stars, the Raja Muda is one regatta where everyone is important, with equally competitive intra-class racing.

Not for the faint hearted, though, the 250nm journey to Langkawi broken into three overnight passage races comprising Port Klang to Pangkor, Pangkor to Penang and Penang to Langkawi. With inshores in Penang and Langkawi, it is also physically demanding.

For the organisers, the event is an enormous logistical challenge. There's race management, safety support and



co-ordination of all the land based activities as well. Tourism Malaysia gave a lot of support\*\* along with the Penang Tourism Action Council, Seaview Resort, Pangkor, Tanjung City Marina, Penang and the Royal Langkawi and Royal Selangor Yacht Clubs.

### Race 1 Port Klang to Pangkor Saturday, 17th November 2007

The 100nm or so leg from Port Klang to Pangkor began shortly after 1300. Initially the breeze filled in, but by nightfall it had disappeared, resulting in much

frustration for many of the participants. First to

finish at 04:44:27: was *Fortis Mandrake* beating Frank Pong's *Jelik* by some 15 minutes. Handicap honours, however, went to Khairul Shahril's new dk46, *Janda Baik*.

It proved a long day for the race committee until mid-afternoon when the last to

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arrive under sail, *Sarabande* in IRC 3, reached Pangkor.

Use of engines is permitted for non-IRC yachts in Classes 5 & 6 — all were tempted to use them at some stage, ranging from two to over 14 hours.

Hans Rahmann's *Yasooda*, David Lindahl's *La Samudra* and Bob Howison's *Aquavit IV* took the honours in IRC 2, 3 and 4 respectively. Peter Jones' stripped out *Jenny III* took handicap honours in the non-IRC Cruising Class 5. The two participating multihulls joined the two vintage

yachts, built pre-1950, in Class 6 with Don McGrath's multi, *Out of the Bag*, winning on handicap.

The only major incident saw *Sirius 1935* run aground near the windward mark. Attempts to tow the boat off had no effect and the crew was obliged to await the incoming to continue their voyage.

### Race 2 Pangkor to Penang Monday, 19th November 2007

After a wet, overcast morning, the 10-knot breeze saw the fleet off in six separate starts, at five-minute intervals, from 1300 on the 65nm passage to Penang.

Initially northwesterly, the breeze then swung round on the nose. Later a storm passed

through causing much discomfort. *Jelik*'s line honour's margin was insufficient with handicap honours going to *Mandrake* followed by Ray Roberts' dk46, *Quantum Racing*.

*Aquavit IV* in IRC 4 and *Out of the Bag* in Class 6 were the only two to repeat their victories of the first race. Neil Williamson's *Resolution of Whitby*, captured a bullet in IRC 2, John Blay's *Walawala* took IRC 3 with Gavin Welman's *Rascal* 1st in Class 5. The fleet arrived throughout the morning until all reconvened at the

Tanjong City Marina, Penang, for the annual tricycle race!

With tricycles still a popular means of transport in George Town, 10 were commandeered for the race around the courtyard of the marina. The constant drizzle failed to dampen spirits but, together with the slippery conditions, the reckless riding didn't do the tricycles any good. Sales of event T-shirts raised enough to pay off the disgruntled tricycle owners to repair buckled wheels and broken seats.

Participants had an open invitation to join the Porsche Preview Party at the QE II waterfront restaurant and bar adjoining the marina. With free flowing champagne, canapés and models strutting their stuff, it was a splendid evening.

### Races 3 & 4 Penang Harbour Wednesday, 21st November 2007

The traditional light airs in Penang Harbour were, again, cause for concern for the RO Jerry Rollin when the fleet gathered for the noon start. One hour passed with no change in conditions. Some 40 minutes later the breeze filled in to five knots and preparations got underway to set marks.

At 1420 IRC 1 finally got away with IRC 3 and 4 following shortly thereafter on a windward/leeward course. Classes 2, 5 and 6 headed off on various geometric courses in the 7-8 knots breeze.

*Moonlight Shadow* and *Jelik* were surprisingly tardy in crossing the line but the latter soon accelerated away. In IRC 3

and 4 starts, both *Zuhal* and *Aquavit IV* were over and went back.

The breeze built to 13 knots but by then it had also swung round to 270 degrees, requiring several boats to put in an additional gybe to make the leeward mark.

Tactics were critical. *Zuhal* and *Lunchcutter II* carried their kites too long and suffered the consequences beyond the mark.

Despite clear sailing instructions, requiring some classes to round the leeward mark before crossing the finish line, once again the RO caught several boats out. Transgressors included *Impiana*, *Skybird* and *Mat Salleh* . . . all DNF.

A second race was soon underway for IRC 1, 3 and 4, but, with the wind dying, the race was shortened to just one lap.

In IRC 1, *Quantum Racing* and *Jelik* both took a race each with *Mandrake* two 2nds. In IRC 3, *La Samudra* won Race 3 with *Zuhal* Race 4. *Australian Maid* finished with two 2nds. In IRC 4, *Aquavit IV* took Race 3 and, with *Skybird*, *Blue Royale* and *Jandi* all OCS, *Mata Hari* took Race 3.

Sent on a geometric course, *Scipio of Parkstone* in Class 5 encountered problems with its navigation systems and, having set a course, found itself heading in a different direction to the rest of the fleet. At the back, and in dying airs, the crew decided to call it a day.

On an extended geometric course, it was a close finish for line honours in IRC 2 between *Yasooda* and *Intrigue* with *Yasooda* inching ahead at the line, but losing out to *Intrigue* on handicap.

*Rainbow Dream* took Class 5 while the catamaran *Out of the Bag* took Class 6.

Somewhat surprisingly the Eastern & Oriental hotel bowed out of hosting the prizegiving this year, but the Penang Tourism Action Council came to the rescue offering use of the Khoo Kongsit\*\*\*. This magnificent gilded clan temple of the Khoo family made a dramatic setting for the evening's awards.

### Race 5 Penang to Langkawi Thursday, 22nd November 2007

After shopping expeditions, reprovisioning, refuelling, (surprisingly difficult in the marina) or just exploring George Town (see mansion, opposite bottom), it was soon time to head out into the harbour for the start of the 55nm passage race to the final destination of Langkawi.

FH joined Jon and Sandra Stonham, their daughters Alex and Nicky, and family friend Rod on the *Tayana 47*, *Tui Tai*. Having spent the past 18 months at sea exploring Asia, their voyage is about to conclude when they take up residence in Singapore, to further their children's education under more normal conditions.

The loss of Jon's cap overboard gave the crew an unexpected, but worthwhile, opportunity to practice a man-overboard drill. A swift and successful recovery gave FH much comfort . . .

First away was Class 6 followed by Class 5, where, in full view of the committee boat, to avoid an OCS, *Rascal* came down on *Panacea* resulting in a protest by the latter.



However, it was a lesson for all when the protest, although considered sympathetically by the International Jury, chaired by Bryan Willis, was thrown out. The IJ accepted that the red T-shirt flown in protest represented a flag, but rejected the protest on the technicality that it was not flown for the duration of the race. Something of an embarrassment also for *Panacea*'s skipper and RYA instructor Dave Moxey.

This turned out to be a major let off for *Rascal*, which went on to win the race on handicap.

With the staggered starts the fleet made an impressive site leaving Penang Harbour. The narrow shipping channel required yachts to stay clear of the container traffic. Those that strayed too close were soon made well aware of their transgressions with soundings of ships' horns.

*Tui Tai* made steady progress covering some 14nm in 2.5 hours leaving a diminishing Penang on the hazy horizon.

With numerous fishermen casting nets in the area it was critical to keep a close lookout. In an earlier race, *Australian Maid* had fallen victim to one taking over an hour to free itself.

Tactics were, as always, critical, whether to stay inshore or offshore, whilst timing also came into play. The Stonhams, having consulted with Warwick Downes of *Mandrake*, and with the possibility of a tropical storm (off Vietnam) causing additional turbulence in the area, *Tui Tai* chose to hug the coast.

By 2030 a weather front could be seen way out to port, moving steadily closer. As the sky

darkened, the wind hit 16 knots. A quick reef was put in the main but the *Tayana* skirted the worst of it; those that stayed offshore faced the full fury of the storm, together with a drenching, and slack water.

*Tui Tai* continued to make slow progress until 2115 when the predicted offshore breeze kicked in carrying the 47-footer on a straight line to Langkawi.

The projected finish time around midnight came and went as the wind lightened although momentum was still maintained.

With the protest thrown out, *Rascal* took the honours from *Tui Tai* in Class 5. In Class 6, *Eveline*, which for the first time completed a race without reverting to its engine, finished 1st followed by *Out of the Bag*.

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The approach proved more taxing than expected with four close tacks required finally to clear the line at 02:23:37.

Safely tied up in the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club's (RLYC) marina, the bar was still going strong at 0400. Much of the talk centred around the protest against *Rascal* and other incidents, including *Jelik*'s ripped main.

With passage races scoring double points and no dropped results the passage Race 5 would play an important role in determining overall results.

*Quantum Racing* took 1st place in IRC 1 but, sadly for *Mandrake*, the tactics that worked so well for *Tui Tai* proved its undoing finishing 4th and possibly costing the Mills 51 the regatta. Although taking line honours, *Jelik* only managed 5th on handicap. *Yasooda*, with its experienced crew, took the honours in IRC 2 and *Zuhal* in IRC 3.

A complete reversal of fortunes took place in IRC 4. The front-runners after four races followed similar tactics staying offshore. Instead it was *Skybird*, after keeping inshore, which won the day.

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