

Raja Muda REGATTA

It was time for experimentation during the 24th Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta, Malaysia, held from Thursday, the 14th, to Saturday, the 23rd of November 2013, in preparation for next year's 25th anniversary.

The organiser, Royal Selangor Yacht Club (RSYC), opted to use the government-built, but under-utilised, Pulau Indah Marina* instead of its own moorings at the club. This was a major improvement as the club's moorings are highly exposed to obstacles brought down the river, including tree trunks. Unfortunately, the marina is so under-utilised that few know its location with several competitors spending hours in taxis searching for it. Even the coach driver of the official bus delivering competitors to the marina on the morning of the first race got lost, requiring a member of staff from the marina to be sent out on a motorbike to guide the way.

As usual, the welcome dinner was held at the RSYC on the Friday evening, where souvenirs were presented to the skippers and entertainment was provided by a bevy of belly dancers.

Port Klang to Pangkor

There was little breeze on Saturday morning (16.Nov.13) when the Classic and Cruiser Classes left the marina for their 1055 and 1100-hour starts. However, it picked up on time and helped get the boats away. IRC Class 4 got going at 1255 but *Nijinsky* and *Mat Salleh* were caught OCS.

The breeze eased slightly during the start of Premier Cruising when Peter Cremers' Warwick 75, *Shahtoosh*, was working its way along the line towards the pin end allowing the rest of the class, including Geoff Hill's Santa Cruz 72, *Antipodes*, the Beneteau 53S, *Baby Tonga*, chartered by Brian Pozzey and Jon Wardill's Cassidy 55, *Australian Maid*, to get a head start. Only one multihull, David Liddell's Corsair C37, *Miss Saigon*, joined the regatta from the outset, making a total of 32 leaving Port Klang. A number of entries, including *Jelik*, pulled out at the last minute after delivery plans were disrupted by typhoons in the Asian Sea. A further three multihulls joined in Penang making a total of 35 (2012 : 31).

A short distance from the start, a mark had been laid to avoid shallows. But not everyone read their sailing instructions — both *Eveline* and the MacGregor 26X, *Rock Steady*, missed it!

By the time *Shahtoosh* reached this mark, the front-runners of the IRC Class 1 fleet, including the Royal Malaysian Armed Forces *dk47*, *Utariid*, and *Hi Fi* had caught up with the rest of the boats in hot pursuit.

In barely 7 knots, Cremers was wishing for at least 10 to get his 42-tonne Warwick 75 into its groove. However, the breeze had other ideas and, at one stage, there were numerous boats in the vicinity heading in a variety of different directions. Around 1420 the kite was raised on *Shahtoosh* which pushed the boat up a gear for a gain of two knots but at an angle of eight degrees off the intended course of 325 degrees. In a race like this, speed was of greater concern than direction.

As always, fishing nets are a major hindrance in these waters and, around 1540, *Shahtoosh* was down to 3 knots skirting nets



Fujin starts

and passing the 103-year-old *Eveline*, which had started two hours earlier. Unfortunately, conditions did not improve and shortly after the gauges were showing three lemons . . . 000. Several vessels ahead had dropped their headsails and *Shahtoosh* followed suit and dropped its anchor. The first time, according to Cremers, in his numerous Raja Mudas that he has been forced to do so. Progress to-date 15.5nm after four hours with a further 70nm to go!

It was 1755 before life returned to the gennaker and the anchor was raised. Soon after, *Shahtoosh* was back up to speed making nine knots. With Cremers willing to share helming duties, there was friendly competition to hold the daily speed record but

handing the helm to the foredeck crew is not recommended; a 70-degree course change and loss of 3 knots boat speed resulted . . .

From there in to the finish at 0226 it was relatively uneventful, except the line itself where it was difficult to see the pin. But a hard-to-port saw *Shahtoosh* crossing safely in the darkness.

After experimenting with the Pangkor Marina two years ago, by popular request the fleet returned in 2012 and again in 2013 to the Sea View Resort. Most boats anchored off the beach. That evening, after a buffet washed down with Tiger beer, awards for the first leg were presented with *Antipodes* taking line honours. Sareb Jeet Singh's *Windsikher* took handicap honours in Class 1, *Antipodes* in Class 2 and *Fujin*, *Mat Salleh*, *Lady Bubbly* and *Kay Sira* in Classes 3 to 6 respectively.

Pangkor to Penang

It was a bright, sunny morning when the crews were ferried out to their vessels for the start of leg two — Pangkor to Penang. Cirrus clouds overhead were accompanied by cotton wool puffs of cumuli overland where a new iron ore terminal is under construction to cater for China's imports from Brazil.

With insufficient breeze to get the Cruising Class and Classics started on their 60nm voyage to Penang, the RO opted to send them motoring up the course in search of breeze, holding the rest of the fleet back for their later start. Finally, they too relocated,

Shahtoosh glides into Penang at dawn

although not far. *Baby Tonga* and *Mat Salleh*, both opting for the marina instead of anchoring off the beach, encountered difficulties leaving their berths due to shallows. They finally made it to the start line . . . just in time.

Although it was only 60nm, as five-time Volvo Ocean Race/Whitbread Race participant Matt Humphries onboard *Antipodes* later explained, the passage was more challenging than even a TP52 regatta. *Antipodes*, while the sea breeze prevailed and clouds built on shore, anticipated a change and headed inshore to pick-up the offshore breeze at the earliest opportunity.

Heeled and, on occasions, with minus 0.4m beneath its keel, *Antipodes* perhaps pushed it too far and mistimed its tack. Suddenly the big 72-footer was stuck on a sandbank. Worse, having led *Hi Fi* until then, the crew were understandably disappointed to see *Hi Fi* disappearing over the horizon, spoiling their goal of winning line honours on each leg.

Meanwhile, in Premier Cruising, making up for its less than favourable start in Race 1, *Shahtoosh* had a great start leading the Class 2 pack over the line. However, — continued overleaf

Continued from previous page — instead of following the majority of the fleet which hugged the coast line, *Shahtoosh* opted to stay out avoiding the 3-knot eddies that briefly slowed progress inshore but where gains were later reaped out of the offshore current.

As the breeze built to 9 knots, *Shahtoosh* hauled in both Team Sailing Adventures on *Baby Tonga* and *Australian Maid* and then stretched its lead. Having observed *Australian Maid* flying its kite but not apparently making significant gains, it was debated whether to raise the kite and head inshore to catch the offshore breeze when it prevailed. Finally the skipper made the call and *Shahtoosh* was again powered up.

As squall clouds built to starboard, and with just 1m below the keel (permission to go below 2m was needed from the owner), it was time to head out again. But this took the big Warwick into a minefield of fishing nets. Although some were lit by red and green illuminated buoys, many were not.

Trying, like *KukuKerChu* on the horizon, to skirt the storm-cloud, *Shahtoosh* was eventually caught in a 20-knot squall only to be followed by the calm after the storm, which allowed both Sailing Adventures and *Australian Maid* to make gains at the finish.

Unfortunately, with its mast too tall to fit under the new Penang bridge, *Shahtoosh* was obliged to sail around the island and, at dawn, approached Straits Quay. Many of the competitors had anchored outside the marina to avoid being stranded at low tide.

Late that afternoon the rickshaw race was held at the Quay only to be briefly interrupted by a downpour. The International Jury was almost required to adjudicate on foul play when one team was forced by another into the railings. Had it been on the water they could well have faced a 69.1 ruling for unsporting conduct.

Penang Harbour Races

As always, conditions for the Penang Harbour races proved challenging. Two separate race courses were in use, one for the Classics, Premier Cruising and Cruising Classes and another for the Racing fleets and Multihulls, which were joining *Miss Saigon* for the final leg to Langkawi. Several of the Classics again appeared not to have read instructions and were lingering around the incorrect start boat before realising and heading off to their correct start area.

At least this year there was an 8-knot breeze and, after a brief delay to reposition the pin, the Racing fleets got away. Class 1 and Multihulls were set a windward/leeward course with the mark set at 1.6nm at 50 degrees whilst the mark for Classes 3 and 4 was set at 1.3nm. Entertainment for at least the spectators was provided by the Class 1 fleet converging on the leeward mark. *Windsikher* failed to allow sufficient margin for the cross current, hitting the mark and taking it away just as the rest of the fleet were rounding. A RIB was immediately dispatched with an M flag to become the new mark until the old one could be retrieved, but even this suffered a similar fate as Peter Wilcox's Schionning Gforce 1500 cat, *Mojo*, likewise ensnared it and towed it out of position! Meanwhile the cat, *Boomerang*, had disappeared up the course and, perhaps not having read the sailing instructions, failed to live up to its name. It did not return for the second race.

A second race followed for the Racing fleets but a major wind shift resulted in a new windward mark having to be set. *Sea Bass*



rounded the leeward mark but struggled to get back onto the new heading and was subsequently offered a last place finish to save it — and the race committee — from further suffering.

At the end of the day, *Foxy Lady VI* took the honours in the first race whilst *Windsikher* redeemed itself to take the

second in Class 1. *Sea Bass* took Class 3 honours in the first race after *Fujin* was disqualified for a mark rounding incident, but likewise redeemed itself in the second. *Mat Salleh* made it two bullets for the day in Class 4. Despite its entanglement with the leeward mark, *Mojo* took line honours in the first race and again in the second but lost out to *Miss Saigon* on handicap in both. Meanwhile, on the other course, a short race was held for the Classics and Cruising Classes with *Sade2* and Jerry Lau's *Wysiwyg II* from Singapore taking the honours respectively. Unfortunately for the Premier Cruising fleet, a mark on their course went astray and the race was abandoned to be re-sailed in Langkawi.

The evening's awards were held at the Straits Quay Atrium where Penang street food and lion dances were enjoyed.

Penang to Langkawi

Another change introduced this year was the destination in Langkawi — Telaga Harbour Marina instead of the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club (RLYC). Wicky Sundram, GM of RLYC was not unduly concerned. In fact, he seemed quite relieved as RLYC will entertain many of the competitors again in January 2014 for its own regatta. The marina, unlike RSLYC's, provides a number of bars and restaurants in a Mediterranean style setting.

It took just 7 hours 42 minutes and 10 seconds for Neil Pryde, who joined his Welbourn 52, *Hi Fi*, in Penang, to cover the 58nm to Langkawi. This was a new record, beating the previous one of around 9 hours set by John Wardill's *Australian Maid* back during the first five years of the regatta when the race finished, as it did this year, in the vicinity off Pulau Rebak. Despite the disturbed seas and rain squalls, both *Foxy Lady VI* and *Utarid* were able to relegate *Hi Fi* to 3rd on handicap.

Starting five minutes earlier than *Hi Fi*, *Antipodes* in Class 2

was first across the finish line in 7 hours 45 minutes and 40 seconds but lost out on handicap to *Shahtoosh* as well as *Australian Maid*.

Mat Salleh encountered a problem with its electric engine, which has only recently been installed. According to owner, Neil Ankcorn, the new engine has improved performance because it has rebalanced the boat . . . particularly

given the extra kilos skipper and crew have added over recent years. They were towed to the start line by *Sea Bass*. Jeff Harris, chairman of the organising committee scored his first bullet in this year's series, with his J-92S *Nijinsky* taking Class 4 honours. Simon Piff's *Rainbow Dream* took the honours in the Cruising Class while *Sade2* added a third bullet to its tally in the Classics.

Langkawi Harbour Races

Normally most of the fleet are able to enjoy a lay day on arrival in Langkawi, except the Multihulls, but not — continued on page 97



Continued from page 42 — this year with all expected to report at 1400 on the penultimate day. While racing got underway on schedule for the Racing classes, conditions were surprisingly cold, dull and overcast with the wind oscillating this way and that. Most were relieved when the RO called it a day after one race.



Hi Fi again led the Class 1 fleet around the course but, doing so, helped forewarn the trailing fleet.

This allowed others to take evasive action and, again, enabled *Foxy Lady VI* to take handicap honours. John Cray's *Swan 42*, *Sea Bass*, finally got the better of the Beneteau First 44.7, *Fujin*, in Class 3 while *Nijinsky* and *Miss Saigon* added consecutive bullets in Class 4 and Multihulls.

Unfortunately, racing was delayed for Premier Cruising, Cruising and the Classic Classes when the Maritim Malaysia crew, who have been supporting the event with boats for starts, mark laying and transport along the route, abandoned their post to fix their air-conditioning, leaving the RO in a conundrum. Marks were retrieved and racing finally got underway with Geoff Hill of *Antipodes* probably wishing it hadn't since he was firstly called OCS and then ran aground! *Australian Maid* took advantage of *Antipodes'* misfortune to take the bullet. *Lady Bubbly* in Cruising Class and *Kay Sira*, back in home waters, took the honours in the Classics.

Inclement conditions proved no barrier to the weather-hardened sailors as they headed out for the final day of competition. Initially there was sufficient breeze to get the Cruising Classes off on their passage race but the oscillating and dying breeze delayed the start for the Racing fleets whilst the RO went in search of breeze. Thankfully, the clouds dissipated and the sun broke through later.

Earning its fourth bullet of the series, Keith Miller's *Harmony 38*, *Sade2*, comfortably took the Classic Class title and the Eveline trophy ahead of the *Slipper 42*, *Kay Sira*.

Lady Bubbly, having won Class 6 last year, added the RLYC Cup to its trophy cabinet as winner of this year's Cruising Class. Finishing strongly, *Australian Maid* added a second bullet to take the Premier Cruising Class 2 title with *Shahtoosh* slotting in to 2nd place in the series. The grounding to blame, *Antipodes* finished 3rd.

The Dehler 34, *Skybird*, won the final race for Class 4 but a 2nd place for *Nijinsky* initially appeared to give them the series taking into account the dropped race. However, a recalculation of the results saw *Mat Salleh*, with four bullets, emerge victorious. *Fujin* returned to winning ways in the final Class 3 race to take the series with five bullets, one DSQ and one 2nd place, ahead of *Sea Bass* and *Steel De Breeze*.

Persistence pays, as Bill Bremner and crew of the Mills King 40, *Foxy Lady VI* (ex-*Blondie IV*), will attest. Having competed 10 times in five different boats he was finally rewarded with the Raja Muda Cup. Finishing the series with a bullet gave *Hi Fi* 2nd place in the series whilst David Ross' Ker 40, *Kukukerchu*, with New Zealand 2012 Women's 470 Olympic Champions and 2013 ISAF Rolex World Women Sailors of the Year, Jo Aleh and Polly Powrie onboard, their 2nd place in the final race elevated it above *Windsikher* for 3rd.

Considering the effort and logistics involved, the event really does deserve greater participation. No doubt some of the experiments this year will be retained whilst others may be discarded in favour of tradition. However, you can be sure that many who participated will be back for the challenge next year between the 14th and 22nd of November 2014 and the 25th anniversary celebrations. Are you up for it?

* *Pulau Indah Marina*: plans were prepared to relocate the RSYC to this venue but at present there is reluctance to move from their existing premises

