



There can be few offshore races where the transition from passing round tubes of Factor 50 sunscreen to the rapid issuing of life-jackets can be quite so abrupt. One minute up on the rail admiring the fleet scattered over a clear horizon, the next spitting out a cocktail of warm rain water and sea spray while frantically grinding on a winch.

Onboard Keith Garry's *Beaux Esprit*, the crew were a highly experienced and friendly bunch with many Raja Mudas under their belts and included race committee chairman Martin Axe, who is recognised as the driving force behind the Raja Muda. He was competing in his 25th event.

Forty boats (2013 : 35) of varied designs and sizes made the start at Port Klang a spectacular affair in bright sunshine and a pleasant 12 to 15-knot north westerly. Date — Saturday, the 15th of November 2014. Richard Curtis' 103-year-old pilot cutter, *Eveline*, skippered by Trevor Richards, looked particularly graceful (and slightly incongruous) against the ultra modern lines of the enormous 38-metre, *Escapade*. Newcomer *Sophia*, a Davidson 35, racing in the cruiser class, was confidently handled by Kiwi sailmaker, Philip Auger, who went on to win six events with his charming Danish partner, Astrid Graha.

It was a reasonable start for *Beaux Esprit*, which Axe modestly rated as "4 out of 10" and there was no incident of note as the fleet spread and the sun began to set.

Just as the crew started contemplating the eagerly anticipated evening meal of home-made beef goulash, the rival boat ahead, *Rikki Tikki Tavi*, made an unexpected and sudden tack to port. This made Garry and his pit team somewhat twitchy for the first time since the start and binoculars were called for. Was there a shoal ahead, a wind hole, was it those brooding grey clouds over the land on the starboard bow or was this a case of psychological games being played by Chris Furness and crew?

The brooding clouds were now black and threatening, though when Scott Inglis on the foredeck politely asked Axe on the helm whether he thought a sail change from

No.1 to No.2 genoa might be appropriate, he made it sound like a casual enquiry about the price of fish in Reykjavik. Axe's considered reply to the suggestion will remain in the mind for some time.

"That might be prudent."

Within a few minutes, thick dark cumulous cloud started emitting huge bolts of lightning and the reassuring 12 knot westerly became a 25-knot blast accompanied by a weighty deluge.

With the No.2 hoisted, the wind increased further, gusting 30 knots plus and then shifted 180 degrees before the second sheet had been secured to the No.2.

"How long until we can tack?" came the polite enquiry from the pit with careful restraint as the port sheet was being secured up front by Inglis in the lashing rain.

"We will be in Pangkor before the bar closes at this rate," predicted Raja Muda veteran and loquacious one-man party machine, Dom Liddell, looking up as he trimmed the main. Before the storm had completed its work, though, the No.2 had to be lowered, the main reefed and there had been some minor damage to the vang.

By nightfall the black skies were filled with huge long tentacles of lightning which illuminated the fleet for a second and exhilaration rapidly turned to frustration as the Raja Muda weather Gods worked their magic and the wind dropped from 20 knots to zero knots by about 2100. With three large zeros displayed on the log for what seemed like hours and with the tide setting south, Liddell ordered the kedge anchor to be readied but inevitably, having located the anchor and dragged it up through the fore hatch and secured a line, the first whisper of a breeze was felt.

With only the gentle snoring of the off watch crew as background noise, *Beaux Esprit* slipped through the inky water towards Pangkor, crossing the line at 0342 in the morning. From there it was the beautiful anchorage on the southwestern corner of Pulau Pangkor, next to a luxury resort reputedly once frequented by the late tenor, Pavarotti.

If the violent weather shifts had been cause for alarm, it was nothing compared to the karaoke competition held at the Bay View Hotel after the prize ceremony that evening. Mr Pavarotti would not have been impressed by the musical efforts of the assembled crews. Dom Liddell insisted on leading the *Beaux Esprit* crew in a passionate cover version of "I will survive" by Gloria Gaynor. They compensated for the painful lack of harmony with some vigorous stage dancing and impromptu audience participation with Neil Pryde's crew from *Hi-Fi* who had been overall winners in Class 1 that day and first over the line by some two hours.

The musical awards justifiably went to *Aeolus XC* who had the unfair advantage that two of Simon Read's crew members could actually sing. Special thanks to *Foxy Lady VI* for clearing the bar with their excruciating rendition of Que Sera Sera. Even the monkeys headed back to the jungle in disgust.

If Leg 1 was challenging, Leg 2 to Penang delivered 19 hours of meteorological torture during the slowest leg to Penang in the 25-year history of the regatta.

After the accustomed sudden storm, deluge and wind shift, the interminable night calm in an enormous hole of glassy sea. The deadly quiet only disturbed by the rhythmic snoring and snorting of the off watch crew sprawled like corpses over the coach roof or half covered by wet sail bags in the saloon and forepeak cabin.

Hour after hour of coaxing the wind, muttering curses and prayers to the Raja Muda weather Gods, trying all points of the compass to move us slowly from the hole, twitching on the asymmetric sheet, adjusting the mainsheet for the thousandth time, watching the coastline, discussing another sail change,

checking the GPS for our COG, telling filthy jokes, and just staring out into the inky blackness and the stars above . . .

By 0400 an onshore breeze arrived allowing progress towards the



# Raja Muda REGATTA

massive new road bridge that connects Penang with Butterworth and the finish line. No chance of threatening defending Class 3 champions

*Fujin* on this leg, so beers are issued and Terry Grundy miraculously produces a bottle of Jameson whisky just to ease the pain and warm damp joints. Talk turns to tactics for that afternoon's rickshaw race on the quayside in historic Penang.

A trickle of boats arrived throughout the morning (Tuesday) with most anchoring in the channel off Straits Quay. Multihulls *Hurricane*, *Java* and *3ltch* made the best of the comfort and convenience of a marina berth and were joined by a small number of yachts with shallow draughts. Some of the crews slept aboard, others chose the comfort of a hotel.

The 18th of November was a welcome rest day but for the late afternoon rickshaw races that drew

a huge crowd of onlookers. Collisions between the match racing teams were the order of the day — loadsa laughs.

Wednesday, the 19th, began with light, variable conditions. For the Penang inshore, the AP only came down at 1430. All division got away in a light breeze that built as the

afternoon progressed. A big 80-degree wind shift favoured the back runners (who hadn't rounded the windward mark) and caused a reshuffle of the order in the first race.

The breeze continued to build for the second race but this time with bullets coming down off the mountains and with no noticeable wind shifts. Racing finished at 1730, running over the regular finish time allowance by some 30 minutes. Tides were not favourable back at the marina and it was for some tricky manoeuvres aboard *Foxy Lady VI* to — *continued on page 93*



Cockpit of *Beaux Esprit* (top left) and 'Navigation Nick' (above)



*Mandrake* (top), police support (inset) and on the rail of *Beaux Esprit*, enroute Penang (above)

**Continued from page 27** — reduce its draft in the channel (like crew hanging out on the boom in numbers).

That night, the sailors were entertained by local school children performing traditional dances and by an amazing lion dance on poles with the tandem team in the lion suit jumping from pole to pole — frightening and amazing at the same time. We were told they were the world champions but it doesn't bear thinking about had one of them slipped. The buffet was sumptuous with every taste catered for. Beer, wine, cider and soft drinks for all along with fresh coconuts.

Thursday, the 20th, saw the fleet gather at 1300 in the bay off Penang. Fluky, light winds delayed the start so the accompanying police boat sensibly put out the message 'Follow Me' and proceeded to move out of the bay in search of better winds . . . and Langkawi. Eventually the wind picked up and race officer, Jerry Rollin, got all the classes on their way with the slower ones starting first.

After clearing Penang, and a number of sail changes, the fleet slowly moved into open water where the breeze increased to around 20 knots, whipping up the sea to about 2 metres and giving the boats a slingshot effect towards Langkawi. Geoff Smith's 72-footer, *Antipodes*, took overall line honours just 2.12 minutes ahead of Neil Pryde's Welbourn 52, *Hi Fi*, but he was pipped by Paul Winkelmann's JV 44, *Island Fling*, by just 18 seconds for the handicap win. In the other divisions, *Antipodes* took 1st in Premier Cruising, Gordon Ketelbey's Beneteau 44.7, *Fujin*, won IRC 3.

Friday, the 21st, in Langkawi, saw racing start late to allow crews recovery time from their run from Penang. Conditions on the water were superb producing some tight racing amongst the IRC classes.



Rikshas  
Race official

Saturday, the 22nd, kicked off with a light northeasterly blowing in the harbour and ended when a storm approached from the south. There was a complete change in the direction of the wind, accompanied by 20 knots plus and showers. *Hi Fi* tangled with the windward mark anchor line and, believe it or not, *EFG Bank Mandrake* did the same shortly after! Spinnakers were shredded with many boats trawling for prawns. More observant skippers managed to drop their kites and two-sail reach, knocking off some of the front runners to podium spots.

Class 1: Bill Bremner's *Foxy Lady VI* successfully defended its title and collected another Raja Muda Cup. Paul Winkelmann's *Island Fling* secured 2nd overall and, apart from a 6th in Race 4, could have been top of the table.

Class 2: Even after running aground during the last race, last year, Geoff Hill's *Antipodes* secured the Premier Cruising class. Defending champion Jon Wardill's *Australian Maid* came in 2nd overall. Andrew Cocks Simonis Voogd 56, *Starlight*, took 3rd place. In future they can expect better results when the crew is more familiar with the boat . . . along with better luck.

Class 3: Gordon Ketelbey's *Fujin* defended its IRC 3 class title with a solid seven bullets. Keith Garry's X-412, *Beaux Esprit*, came out on top for podium position over Chris Furness' Elan 410, *Rikki Tikki Tavi*, with 2nd and 3rd places.

Class 4: Mike Downard's Farr 1104, *Piccolo*, just pipped Jeff Harris' J92S, *Nijinski*, for the IRC 4 class. John Kara's Dehler 34, *Skybird*, held down 3rd overall.

Class 5: Philip Auger and Astrid Grah's Davidson 35, *Sophia*, had six wins, giving them the perfect score to win the Cruising Class and taking the silverware. Chris Mitchell's Naut 40, *Lady Bubbly*, had to settle for 2nd overall. The RSYC team (new kids on the block) on a Jeanneau Sun Odyssey, *Panacea*, ended up in 3rd overall.

Class 6: Barry Wickett's Slipper 42, *Kay Sira*, took 1st in Classic Class, wrestling the

trophy off Dato Richard Curtis' centenarian pilot cutter, *Eveline*.

Class 7: Rolf Heemskerk's chartered Stealth 11.8m, *Hurricane*, slipped into 1st but not after a solid challenge from sistership, *Java*. Danny and Nigel's Bali-built trimaran, *3litch*, struggled a little but it was their first regatta on the brand new trimaran.

The Raja Muda is a tough one, with testing conditions, strenuous overnight passages, logistics and little time to relax and recover ashore. The reward is the challenge and the camaraderie. A good indication of what is involved is that many teams employed logistical support ashore.

Martin Axe estimated that it took some 40 support people to organise the logistics for the 260-nautical-mile race. Consider that there are three locations, nine days of activity and even police escort bikes with flashing lights and sirens when transporting the gear for the officials from location to

location. There are also boat services to the islands and, in Langkawi, a commercial vehicle barge. One of the main supporters of the event is the Malaysian Marine Police, lead and coordinated by DSP Tharamadurai. Tharamadurai is a veteran of 23 Raja Muda Regattas! Jerry Rolins and his race

start team should also be commended for their excellent and seamless effort getting the boats on their way each day regardless of the trying conditions.

As 2014 was the 25th and silver anniversary, HRH Sultan Sharafuddin Shahm was in attendance in Langkawi to present the Raja Muda and Jugra trophies. The Sultan of Selangor was also on hand to launch a commemorative 25th anniversary book, personally signing many copies. The usual Malaysian protocol was eased and the Sultan mixed with skippers, crews and media throughout the launch party and final prize giving evening.

The 25th Anniversary book 1990-2014 can

be purchased at the Royal Selangor Yacht Club Port Klang or by contacting Fay Khoo on [fk@faykhoo.com](mailto:fk@faykhoo.com) for those interested in next year's Raja Muda please contact the club thru the website [www.rmsir.com](http://www.rmsir.com). The Raja Muda is endorsed by the Royal Ocean Racing Club UK.



The silvery light of Penang Harbour



Penang start