

The 2021 Quicksilver Race was a Huge Success!

This year's Quicksilver Cup, presented by Ashley Yachts was held on April 23rd from Charleston Harbor to the Port Royal Sound entrance. Though the initial weather reports were not ideal, the gods threw us a bone and made it one of the most pleasurable trips south we have had in a long time. I mean when is the last time we saw 8-12 knots from the east and flat water? Following this event, the organizers have asked me to put together a recap of the race and the week or so leading into it.

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare! Leading into this event, "The Wingmen" began preparing for this race by converting Wings from day or buoy racing into overnight offshore racing. We began with removing all the items on board that we know we would not use on this race. Then we added in the safety items which World Sailing Requires for a Coastal Event. [This Link](#) opens a filterable spreadsheet with the items needed for each category of offshore events. Any gear that we know we will need for the trip home was loaded into the truck which met us in Port Royal after the race. Thank you Commodore Margaret Hekker!!!!

We also inspected all the rigging, hardware, and sails to be used in this race. Since we had just sailed Charleston Race Week with mostly the same gear, some of this was simply talking through the list with the team to ensure that we had no equipment failures.

We also began a daily download of weather for the racecourse. When doing this, we not only looked at the forecast, but the current conditions leading into the event and the historical conditions during this time of year over a 5–10-year span. This data can all be found on the NOAA website. We also tuned in to Shea Gibson's broadcast to reinforce the data we already had as well as add some human element to the interpretation. Having this data, the team can start getting into the mindset of the conditions to expect. In this case, the forecast changed from a downwind "sleigh ride" to a close/beam reach over the two weeks leading into the event. The one thing that we did not expect was the flat water. But we knew that we would have a long port tack reach at the very least.

A clean bottom is a fast bottom. Wings gets a bottom cleaning once a week. And when we have a race, we make sure that this cleaning gets done as late as possible before the race. I highly recommend Mickey! Feel free to reach out to me if you need his contact info.

The day of the race, we load on our food and drinks for the race. As far as crew gear is concerned, we do ask each crew member to only bring what they know they will wear. In this case, we knew that we all needed a water bottle, an offshore life jacket, a tether, a pair of trousers and a jacket. Anything beyond that would go in the truck.

Food is necessary! We always carry more food than we need. In our opinion, having a decent variety of snacks and Pub Subs (Publix Subs) on board keep the crew happy and a happy crew will stay in the game longer. We have a 5-gallon water jug and pump on board and ask everyone to bring a water bottle. We also carry Gatorade, Double-Shot coffee drinks, Coke Zero and Beer. Though we try and limit ourselves to one beer each at sunset, sometimes we award a team member with a beer for going above and beyond. We knew we needed to have beer in reserve for the 21-mile motor up the river after the finish. It is a good thing our refrigerator is on the port side for this race.

Let's Go Racing! We try to be in Race Mode from the time we get to the dock until the race is finished. We play fun music to get everyone excited, we do a safety briefing, we talk about race strategy and we double check the gear. And yes, we challenge each other to leave one more item from their gear bag.

Though this was a distance race, we treated this start like it was any other. We knew that we did not want to sail in the dirty air of another boat all the way to G15. So, we strived hard to get a good, clear air start and be in the lead before we reached R4 in the harbor. We did have a scare when the J/120, Illyria crossed ahead of us after a couple minutes of racing. But, once we were able to get to the right and into more pressure, we were able to edge them out. If we could keep them and Mutiny, the Swan 42 behind us until we reached Ft Sumter, we had a chance of beating them on corrected time. Our team pulled of 12 nice tacks between G25 and G15. Mutiny did sneak past us during this. However, we were happy how close we were to them when we finally turned south. Once we rounded G15, we knew that the rhumb line to the finish was a course of 236, about 15 degrees below close hauled. When we saw Mutiny sailing higher than the rhumb line, we did question the course. However, once we checked the chart, we were certain that sailing less distance in a Time-on-Time race would be better than trying to sail high in dirty air. We kept the sheets eased and hoisted a small stay sail inside the jib. We noticed that this stay sail only helped in boat speed when we had 10-knots or more in True Wind Speed (TWS). That said, we furled and unfurled this sail as necessary for the next hour.

Keep the crew fresh! At 8:00 PM, two hours into the race we rolled into our crew rotation which gave everyone a chance to drive and trim. We rotated at the top of every hour. I moved to the Nav Station after leaving the wheel to ensure that our strategy was working, and it was. By 8:15, we were a 1/2-mile abeam of Mutiny and pulling ahead. The main and jib were never cleated and the staysail furler was active as the breeze increased and decreased.

From the Nav Station, I checked the conditions at the Fripp Nearshore Buoy at every hour. To do this, I would send an email from my phone to saildocs requesting the conditions for that station and immediately received the data back via email. Having this data gave us confidence that the breeze ahead would remain between 110 and 130 TWD at 9-12 knots. This meant that our drivers needed to concentrate on keeping a straight heading and the trimmers would have a long night. It also meant that we could soon hoist our Code Zero and eventually our A3 reaching spinnaker. And once these sails were up and pulling the Stay Sail would be flying continually. In fact, once we were sure that the "Soft Sails" were solidly in play, we switched from the smaller stay sail to a larger one which also serves as our J4 on an inner forestay. I cannot say enough for our trimmers and bow team throughout the night. I think we counted 15 different sail configurations from the start to the finish. Each change gained us ¼ to ½ knot of boat speed when we saw our speed fall off. A ¼ knot is ton of time over 62-miles.

I encourage everyone to use saildocs.com in their decision making. It is a free service and gives you real data. In this case I sent an email to queary@saildocs.com with nothing in the subject line. In the body, I sent <https://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/mobile/station.php?station=41033>. The email always took a few minutes to send as we were just far enough offshore to get a low cell signal. However, it would usually go within a couple of minutes. On a race further offshore, a sat phone can be used to send these types of "text only" emails. Try this from your mobile phone or pc. And visit saildocs.com to see the incredible possibilities.

Stay within the rules! Please note that there are many places that you can download the weather. However, World Sailing has very strict rules about where you get your weather from. If accessing weather information while racing, it is important to know that the rules on this were clarified in the recent ISAF Case Book of interpretations of the RRS 2013-2016. The relevant rule is Rule 41 OUTSIDE HELP part (c). This rule states that "A boat shall not receive help from an outside source, except (c) help in the form of information freely available to all boats." There have been many liberal interpretations of "freely available" and thankfully CASE 120 in the 2013-2016 ISAF Case Book

clarifies the rule. The case states that “information freely available” is information that is available without monetary cost and that may be easily obtained by all boats in a race. The case allows for this rule to be changed by a race committee in the Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions.

Another tool we used was in our race software, “Expedition”. This software not only reinforced our decision to stick to the rhumb line. But the sail chart tool within the software reminded us when we needed to make a sail change. This is an extremely cool tool when you are unsure which sail to have up. I understand that some boats do not have the sail inventory that Wings and Mutiny have. However, this can be adapted to any boat and inventory. Your sailmaker can help you build a sail chart in excel. If you need help obtaining this, feel free to reach out to me. If I do not have the information you need, I will find someone who does.

All great races end with a great party! A huge kudos to the CORA Board for finding a great marina and party venue in Port Royal. Agreed, the bridge is a limiting factor. However, there is an anchorage just outside and another on the south end of the peninsula. The marina was extremely welcoming and seemed to have plenty of room for us. Once we were all safely moored and had a small nap, the restaurant at the top of the dock was the place to be! Marker 244 had a solid menu for lunch and a full beer, wine and spirits menu for the sailors to enjoy. And the meal they put out during awards was absolutely delicious! Even with the rain, the teams seemed to enjoy their time in Port Royal. Hopefully, we can go back again soon!

All-in-all, this race was one for the books and should be considered by all CORA boats who are eligible. Afterall, we are the CHARLESTON OCEAN RACING ASSOCIATION. Congratulations to all of the teams who made the trek!

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