

# 2016 SOLENT SHAKEDOWN Race Report & Results

## What great start to the 2016 SORC season!

24 boats including lots of new faces, and a few old faces with new boats, turned out for SORC's 2016 opening weekend to compete for Races 1 and 2 of the Inshore Series.

Race 1 of the Solent Shakedown certainly lived up to its name, with a testing course and tricky conditions. From Gilkicker the fleet beat West along the Solent to Champagne Pol Roger, then had a spinnaker run via Winner to Bembridge Ledge, before a beat back via Horse Elbow to Browndown for what was intended to be a final short spinnaker leg to the finish at Gilkicker.

With a massive 24 boats entered, the Race Committee made the wise decision to start classes 2 and 3 (unrated) together, 15 minutes before the 15-strong class 1.

In class 1, Tony White sailing Mzungu got a great start at Darling Associates Buoy, while the majority of the fleet bunched up near to the beach. Paul Brant sailing Ninjod was first to round the windward mark, but Rob Craigie was quick to hoist Bellino's large orange running spinnaker and overhaul Paul who had chosen his smaller A3. The five boats in the Sunfast 3600 fleet tried different tactics on the run, some going deep, with others sailing their angles. Nigel Colley on Fastrak sailed the hottest angle, heading closest to the mainland, and Nigel passed what he thought was No Man's Fort to starboard, passing through a line of yellow posts ('funny', he thought, 'those weren't here last time') and realising that he'd actually passed North of Horse Sand Fort, a mark of the course. Despite being an expert in threading his way between the concrete blocks of the submarine barrier, Nigel decided not to chance his luck again by retracing his steps and retired from the race.

Meanwhile, the symmetric-rigged spinnakers in the six boat Sunfast 3200 fleet and Richard Palmer on Jangada were enjoying the run, being able to sail deeper than their asymmetric counterparts. However, all were struggling to catch Jerry Freeman on Juliette who had got a flyer. As the fleet sailed down the Solent, the wind built from 10 to 20 knots for a while, causing difficulties for some. Deb Fish sailing Exocet wrapped her spinnaker during the gybe, but recovered to sail the last few minutes of the leg without a spinnaker pole, having had to release the topping lift which was twisted around the spinnaker. Deb and Tony (Mzungu) had a close run in to Bembridge Ledge, but Tony emerged in the lead as Deb managed to twist her jib around the forestay, tacking several times in vain before having to drop the jib to untwist it, and allowing Mzungu to escape. Other boats reported problems with their gybes and drops - plenty for us all to work on at the forthcoming North Sails training day on Friday 6th May!

In the three strong Contessa fleet, George Isted's Concerto was just ahead of Alice Butcher's Panache, but George wrapped his spinnaker around his forestay on the drop and lost 10 minutes sailing beyond the mark until he was able to untangle it.

The wind had got up for the beat back up the Solent, making the fleet work hard on their sail trim in the gusty conditions. Those who tacked onto Starboard at Horse Elbow were rewarded by the wind veering, allowing them to reach into the mark, while those who continued North lost ground. But the race had two more obstacles to navigate - the large dinghy fleet racing out of Lee-on-Solent, on the direct route to and from Browndown, and a cluster of yachts who were milling around Browndown while the early yachts were trying to round it. It was a punchy call to hoist a reaching spinnaker and sail on port through the fleet of dinghies to the finish, and only a few boats dared it, including Juliette, David Cowell's Jester and Jangada. In the Sunfast 3200 fleet, Deb took great pleasure in finally catching Tony White on Mzungu on the final leg by flying her code zero!

Rob Craigie's Bellino finished first to take line honours, but was pushed into second place on handicap by Juliette, with Jerry Freeman sailing a good race from start to finish and earning a well-deserved win. Richard Palmer did brilliantly to take third place in his first solo race in his new JPK1010, Jangada, finishing just 2s behind Bellino on corrected time! Gary Heward sailed Amylou to win class 2, 10 minutes of Concerto leaving George rueing the 10 minutes he lost due to his spinnaker wrap! Panache won class 3 for unrated boats and Alice was also the first Contessa in her first solo race, taking great delight in reminding George of the fact in the bar. Unfortunately, two boats, Monocle and Oi Oi, were scored DNF after failing to pass the finish mark on the correct side (top tip - read the SIs!).

Keith Thompson was arguably the most improved sailor in the fleet, making up for failing to cross the start line in his first solo race by finishing a very solid 12th in the large fleet, and showing just how steep a learning curve solo sailing can be! Congratulations to all those completing their first solo race with SORC - Mark Hipgrave on Mister Lucky, Peter Tanner on Oojah, Richard Palmer on Jangada, Trevor Way on Tike, Andrew Deeley on Fuzzy Logic, Alice on Panache, Mike Sellers on L'Aquarelle and Paul Reymond on OiOi - we look forward to seeing you again soon!

After Saturday's exertions, the fleet adjourned to Hardy's for a well earned drink and dinner. Nigel Colley gave out prizes to the class winners and top boats in IRC, together with two Race Director's discretionary prizes - one to Alice Butcher for her sterling efforts in the Contessa fleet, and another to Tony Rowe who did an outstanding job of organising berthing and meals on Friday and Saturday evenings - thanks Tony!

## **Race 2.**

With 4-5 knots forecast, the race committee left it until Sunday morning to announce the course - a 7M race comprising a beat from Gilkicker to Champagne Pol Roger, a spinnaker run to Mother Bank, then an upwind leg to Fastnet Insurance. With the tide pushing boats over the line, Classes 2 and 3 got away at 0945, with but OiOi was just OCS giving Paul Reymond the difficult task of getting back over the line in the light winds (good to see Paul pushing hard!). The wind fell off before the Class 1 start, but all managed to work their way uptide and start cleanly. Bellino passed the right side of the ODM but clipped it, and Rob mistakenly thought he had to return to cross the line rather than simply doing a 360 penalty turn and continuing, costing him valuable time. The wind was very flukey on the beat, and those who crossed the line first soon opened up a big gap, but the wind later allowing the later boats to regain some of the lost ground by playing the wind shifts.

The fleet split at the windward mark, some bearing away and heading towards the Isle of Wight whilst others gybed before hoisting spinnakers, staying on the mainland side in search of relief from the ebbing tide. Those on the mainland tried to time their gybes to perfection to lay the mark, and most were caught out when the wind shifted from the NW to the W. On Fastrak, Nigel time his gybe well, but was forced to gybe again to clear a wrap. Those who had crossed to the Island found themselves upwind of the mark again, while those crossing from the mainland gybed to find themselves having to heat up and eventually drop spinnakers and white sail across the Solent. The final leg was a one-legged beat on starboard to the finish. Gary Heward took advantage of the earlier Class 2 start to take line honours ahead of Ian Hoddle's new Sunfast 3600 Game On who led the procession of Class 1 boats to the finish. Nigel Colley's Fastrak managed to overhaul Deb Fish's Exocet on the reach, with the two boats next to finish.

On handicap, Ian Hoddle's Game On was the overall winner - great to see Ian getting to grips with his new boat so quickly! Gary Heward's Amylou took second overall and won class 2, just 4 seconds on handicap ahead of Deb Fish's Exocet in third place overall. Mike Sellers sailed L'Aquarelle to victory in class 3 in his first solo racing weekend.

With different boats on the podium in each race, podium places decided by mere seconds, and so many new boats eligible for the prestigious Rookie award, 2016 is already shaping up to be a very hotly contested season! Thanks to Race Directors Nigel Colley and Simon Mitchell and Race Officer Kirsteen Donaldson for getting two cracking races in despite Sunday's tricky conditions.