



GROSSE POINTE BOAT CLUB **Wednesday Night Sail Race Series** **2018 Notes by Jay Kaiser**

August Series: Race 6 ~ August 29, 2018

Under a fabulous mix of clouds showing fifty shades of grey, we had an offshore breeze at 9 -15 to provide an extra exciting venue for our last race of the series. The off wind start was well contested as the bulk of the fleet hit the line all together - and remained together for much of the first leg. It was interesting to watch as boats played a bit of leap frog trying to get out from under each other's wind shadows to break free. Reggie was first to #5 and continued to pull away to eventually take line honors, but those pesky beats in from #3 chewed away at his time. George, pointing higher managed to sail less distance to finish second (with Mike just on his stern) and correct to first. Don got caught up in the pack for a while, but he too was able to take closer tacks on the beats to make up on a bunch of boats to correct to second. Shahe was able to hang with the big boys long enough on the reaches that the gusty beats, while probably physically exhausting, did not hurt him too bad - he corrected to third.

Dale and a few others, used big jibs to their advantage on the off wind legs, but paid a price on the beats in from

#3. It is a tough call - small jib and play it safe or larger sail and hope the wind steps back a bit. One possible solution on relatively short legs (more than a mile or so and you should be shortening sail) is to de power. A too large jib can be de powered by moving the leads well back and trimming hard. This will flatten the foot of the sail and open the top to spill air you don't really want anyway. Then, run the traveler all the way down and trim the main until just the leech is engaged - the rest of the main will have a big bubble in it. In puffs when you are getting driven up, ease the main completely. Bring it back on as soon as you can. Not very pretty, but it will ease the weather helm so you are not dragging the rudder sideways (not fast) and allow you to point higher.

Or you can do as Reggie did at the first orange. After hardening up at #3 he sailed to an estimated lay line for the orange. Well, he came up about a boat length short; rather than make two tacks, he just stuffed the boat around the mark using only the momentum of the cases of wine, the tv, the microwave, etc. to carry the boat around - again, not pretty, but it worked.

The season's results are on the next tab of the attached worksheet. It is no surprise that Don, with all 1's and 2's took first. Shahe managed to post some consistently good finishes to place second. George was third. Dale went into the night with the potential to snag a series second; he came down the channel with George but fell too far back on the beats, missing placing by one point. Hey, there is always next year.

It was good to see everyone at Bogart's after the race. Al said that even though he can't drink, can't eat and can't talk he was not going to miss it. Did you get a chance to see the miniature cannon Shirley and Shahe presented to him? Pretty cool.

Do not forget, Sunday September 16 is our Fall Regatta and dock party. Your chance to vie for the "Cup". Shahe will be defending, but it is up for grabs! I think we begin the start sequence at 2:00 pm.

August Series: Race 5 ~ August 22, 2018

I did not want the forecast to be correct and I especially did not want to be correct ahead of schedule. At the pre start we had a delightful off shore breeze, but as the start time approached there were signs of it fading. Just before the start we launched the code "S" flag to indicate the short course, believing the breeze would not hold. With some puffs and shifts, the fleet made it around the marks before the wind quit completely.

At the start, everyone was well downstream of the line - the first boat to cross was 19 seconds after the gun. Most everyone strayed too far from the line: remember in light air the cut up air from other starters, a dying breeze and the current will all combine to make trip back to the line painfully slow.

Reggie took some time to get rollin, but rounded #5 1:20 ahead of George. Reggie stretched that lead coming down the channel but seemed to give it back at the orange lining up for the finish. George gained back some of the time crossed as second boat, but actually was able to save his time (take a look, it was a one second difference!) to correct to first. Don seemed to have trouble breaking away from the pack but still managed to correct to second. Now here's a story - just a few years ago Larry was having trouble getting through the starting line ... well, in this race he finished third! A real testament to perseverance - and maybe having the sailing master Peter onboard.

If the booms from the dock seemed louder last night, it may have been because our head cannoneer was back on station. Yes, Al, who has faced down five cancers over the years and now with some very positive test results, is back swinging the mallet. Sid joined us as well, so there was no shortage of conversation.

Next week will be our (don't say it) last race of the season. As is our usual drill, we will get together after the race at Bogart's to shake hands ... or fists and wish each other well until next time.

For one of us there will be no next time. A lost tradition of sailboat racing is the firing two guns at the conclusion of the race. Recently, our dear friend and fellow Wednesday Night Race competitor for more than thirty years, Tom Casselman, passed away. In his memory, we made a two gun cannon salute to signal the completion of his "race". May he rest in peace. I was told that in his last days he was able to join with his five sons (his seemingly endless supply of crew) for a final sail.

August Series: Race 4 ~ August 15, 2018

Easy peasy, lemon squeeze... wind was S 5 -7, no waves, mild temp, all legs were fetchable - this race was about position and boat speed. Passing opportunities due to tactics were limited.

When the wind is S, our start line begs for a port tack dash to the orange. The orange (and for some, even the pin) cannot be fetched on starboard; one can only hope to sail along the line. George tried the spoiler start - sail the line on starboard and tack at the gun, expecting port tackers to give way. Good theory, never seems to work. The port tackers are there and while they should have anticipated a starboard tacker (Conundrum sailed the line prestart several times, it was obvious what they were about) when they are all packed in at the pin, there is no ability to avoid the starboard tacker and they can't just disappear. Conundrum was fouled. So, if there is a pedestrian crossing at a busy road, we know that a person has the right of way to cross and traffic should yield, but are you going to step off the curb and hope for the best? Sorry, I have no solution for this short of the formal protest redress. I heard of another prestart port/starboard incident last night that caused the Larry to miss his start. I do not know if the offending boat did a penalty turn. We are trying to keep our program casual, but each skipper should be able to count on his opponents to abide by the rules - it is a game we are playing. While we do not want a bunch of sea lawyers, using the rules to improve your position is big part of that game - its just that the pieces on the board are a bit more expensive.

Don had the cleanest start and broke away for a nice lead around most of the course with Dale nipping at his heels. Eventually Reggie's waterline paid its dividend and Don was overtaken by the behemoth. Don was able to stay close enough that while Reggie got the gun, Don corrected to first. Dale sailed a solid race but could not pass. Dale corrected to second. Shahe would have liked just a bit more breeze to get up on plane, but still corrected to third by less than a minute.

August Series: Race 3 ~ August 8, 2018

Three words you never want to hear in a weather forecast for a race ... **light and variable**. It was brutal. And I'm only talking about how it was on the dock. Soooo slow. We decided to take times on the first pass in the event the wind died before all could finish. The boats were coming through so slowly that I was losing focus. Thankfully? Shirley was there to prod me back to task after I missed a few. Is it possible to take times sarcastically? I think she figured out a way - I suppose (hope) Shahe is used to it.

Anyway, I liked Bob's starting strategy of coming along the wall to get the favored end, but with forty seconds to go he estimated he was too early and did a 180° and ended up at our channel pointed downstream. The whole fleet was well back from the line at the start. In light air, in a group, it will always take longer than in your practice run, so get up to the line and if you are too early, figure it out from there. Dale came through the line with good way on and

was breaking through the lee of Reggie's *wall of sail*. The fleet worked its way up to #5 in apparently fluky winds because they were often pointed at greatly differing angles while on the same board.

Reggie stretched out to a five minute lead, but lost a bit of it in the last legs; took the gun and line honors and corrected to fourth. I happened to be awake for the races most exciting moment when, on the first pass, Don H took the orange a bit wide and George, right on his transom, took it a bit tighter and got the weather, but then Shahe, right on George's transom, took it even tighter and came out of the turn as weather boat! Shahe had hung onto Don H and George for most of the course, but he seemed to have trouble with the light air beat back to #3. Don H and George did the final legs in just under ½ hour; It took Shahe thirty-seven minutes. Don corrected to first; George corrected to second.

Well, one of the cruel realities of our local weather pattern is that often in light unstable conditions, the wind dies at sunset. Those who finish earlier, finish with some breeze. Those only a bit further back, get left out there. I was happy to see that Bob and Don M stuck it out and finished in drifting conditions. Don managed a stately turn at the second orange and eeked his way to the line. When Bob turned at the second orange, we watched as the distance between his bow and the mark increased - he was going backwards! OMG! he would never get upstream to finish. He eventually got some way on, passed the orange and made it to get a horn.

Our cannoneer in chief is still in sick bay. With no twelve year olds to press into duty, I had to take up the hammer. Al called before the race to advise that he had perhaps overdone his activity for the day and was not up to the excitement of a sailboat race - I wonder ... did he take a look at the **light and variable** forecast and decide to give the race a swerve? Best wishes mate.

August Series: Race 2 ~ August 1, 2018

Under leaden skies the breeze was a delightful 8 - 11, SW at the start and backing to WSW and then W by 8:00. The lake inshore was nice and flat (do you think Shahe noticed?) With the bulk of the fleet taking a port tack line to the orange, the Conundrum crew did a contrary start, starboard tacking the line to tack at the gun, at the pin - nice start! Mike was trying a barge start, coming down to the line from above the pin and was forced to bear away for Conundrum but still able to tuck in neatly. Bob tried an all starboard approach from the flagpole, perhaps an effort to avoid the crush at the pin. But I think the greater distance to be sailed and the impossible angle to the orange worked against him.

After sorting out the start and negotiating the first turn the fleet seemed to get locked into a pack (off wind sailing allows the boats behind to keep better pace while starving the boats ahead of their air (do you think Shahe noticed?). Conundrum managed to have enough lead that they were able to pull away from the pack. Reggie, able to use his ability to reach the air passing undisturbed over the top of the rest of the fleet to start making tracks up the course, then tried down wind tacking, willing to trade sailing greater distance for the higher speeds to be reached when sailing less broad angles. You have to really know your boats polars to get this tactic right.

Now I know the wind was blowing the wrong way, but I think I overheard the conversation on Conundrum as they lead the pack up the channel. PJ: "Hey guys, we have a nice lead". Paul: "Yea, we are crushing it" Joel: "we are going so fast! At #5, let's circle around to the back of the fleet and pass 'em all again!" ...or not.

The beat in from #7 usually spreads the fleet out, but not so much in this race. The two big boats were battling it out and were right on each other at the first pass. But then, there was Dale nicely trimmed sailing full and by right on their heels and next in the fleet to pass through was Shahe (do you think the rest of the fleet noticed?). There were a few position changes in the last legs, but the contest to watch was between the two big boats. Sailing rail to rail on the stretch into the finish, it looked like Mike was ahead by half a boat length and were real to record his time as first. However, Reggie got inside and as we were waiting for the blue hull to cross the line, the white hull found enough room at the pin and poked through Mike's lee to cross first by a quarter of a boat length. We on the dock got so excited we were whooping and distracted our guest cannoneer who looked up to see the action and missed the firing pin. I was intending to take a video of the finish and my 12 year old grand daughter Natalie as guest cannoneer, but got so excited I forgot about the camera.

After all the excitement of that finish, we had to re focus as the rest of the fleet were all coming in quickly - of the nine boats, eight finished within an seven minute span - very close racing after such a long beat from #7.

Mike could have done some aggressive luffing at the finish, but remembering the spirit of our race (and knowing he had saved his time) decided to forgo the FU tactics. Mike also did a 360° to absolve himself from fouling Dale. Dale was just thrilled to have the big boat behind him - if only by a negative 1".

So, Dale was third to finish, but close enough to the big boats to beat 'em, but was not far enough ahead of the guys on his heels to save his tome from them. Shahe, with an exhausted smile on face finished 6 seconds ahead of Don H to correct to first. Don H gained a lot of ground in the manouvres of the last legs to correct to second. Don M made his first appearance of the season and corrected only 20 seconds out of third.

I fear that our head cannoneer Al might be concerned that he has been replaced by a 12 year old. No worries Al, she goes back to Ottawa and your position is safe - just focus on feeling better for next wee

August Series: Race 1 ~ July 25, 2018

It ain't over 'til its over ... At the start we had a light breeze trying to decide if it was E or S. We felt we had enough wind to start with our regular course, knowing we can shorten on the fly later (a great feature of our program's course). The Conundrum had a great start and got off to a comfortable lead, just ahead of Reggie at #5, but a full five minutes ahead of the rest of the fleet. Hold this position and they get the gun and correct to first. But, in a light, shifting breeze anything can, and did happen. The two lead boats were the first to sail out of what breeze there was, leaving the rest of the fleet to close up from the rear. From there it was a bit of a drifting contest. Reggie managed to keep his sails filled and inched his way upstream to the finish line to get the gun for line honors. Don and Dale had Conundrum looking over their shoulders and closed in enough to correct to first and second. Dale was only 10 corrected seconds out of first! Conundrum corrected to third.

Reminder of how it works: Both Sean and Ed/Will (out for the first time this year) decided to spare the dock committee the wait and withdrew on the way in from #3. It just so happens it was a lovely evening to be on the dock and usually we do not mind waiting. That may not always be the case. When any boat has finished within the two hour time limit, there is a race. Skippers are welcome to continue to race for as long as it takes; you can anchor and finish in the morning if you are so inclined, but the dock committee may not share your enthusiasm. If the dock committee has left its station (inclement weather, darkness, tired of watching the paint dry) then a Skipper is to take their own time and report it to be included in the scoring,

Next week is the second race of the series and so we will sail the "long" course as opposed to our "regular" course (replacing #5 with #7). If looks like the wind will not support our intention, we will fly the code "S" flag (white with blue square) to shorten our regular course to #3. If the wind will not support a full circuit of our regular course, we will take times at the first pass.

June Series: Race 6 ~ July 11, 2018

The breeze 9, gusting 14, but with a promise that it was going to ease towards sunset. Perfect temps under a bright sky. I always feel more easy going out in a fresh breeze when there is a prediction it will fade. You get all the rush and stimulation of the loaded rig crashing through the waves - an element of risk, a thrill - "man I'm out here doing something exciting! But, your deeper anxieties are quelled by the knowledge that the wind is going to lay down a bit, I am only a mile from port and I will soon be comfortable again. We are so fortunate. What, a bit too sappy? It's just that it was such a beautiful night to be out.

OK, more analytical. The NE breeze had the fleet coming at the line on starboard, reaching in from the pin with the intention of hardening up at the gun and carrying starboard until they could clear a tack. George led the parade down the line by a few boat lengths, hardened up at the gun, but carried starboard a bit longer than the rest. To my eye, the dock end of the line was favored and that gave George a leg up on getting away clear. It is no coincidence that Don and Shahe, the next two furthest left placed well for the night.

How is this for close? The corrected times for first, second and third were separated by a mere 27 seconds. Don played his usual tactic; he tacked off the start line, got himself clear of traffic and sailed his boat. Don, making it look easy, even after a self imposed penalty turn for letting his boom end graze a mark, corrected to first. Shahe, a bit overpowered, seemed glued to Dale, but managed to shake him at the end to finish 20 seconds ahead of the yellow 27 footer and correct to second. George had Mike's bow wake splashing aboard his transom until Mike decided to go head to wind to sort out an unruly jib gybe. It took me a few minutes to find that old broken record, but here it is: **George got the gun, but corrected to third**.

Elsewhere on the course there were some close quarter contests among the 27 footers and that was evidenced in the high spirits among the attendees at the post race get together.

You will find the first series results on the last tab on the attached worksheet. Don had first locked, but the race for second and third was hotly contested, complete with intimidating (actually not) trash talk e-mails flying between the two contenders. As it worked out it was no conundrum that Shahe placed second and George, believing PHRF is his private scourge, placed third.

Thanks to all who helped on the dock and at the party, Looking forward to the next series starting on the 25th.

June Series: Race 5 ~ July 4, 2018

It was the worst of times, it was the best (well, pretty good) of times. Just before the start we had a light NE. After teasing the skippers with the ability to get some way on, the breeze deteriorated to nothing leaving a hot, rippleless sea state with boats pointing every which a way. George had the best start (we had no concern about anyone being over early), managed to keep some of the air and squirted out on a high line to #5, Don made an early tack, took a bunch of sterns seemingly determined to get to the right. (just desperate or looking for the promised shift to S?)

The air quit inshore and left everyone fighting the current. That's when the anchor chains started rattling. Mike set his hook after drifting back to the start line, Larry thought he would check out Patterson park before setting his. And there we sat.

Oh look! Out in the channel! A green C&C 35 was tearing down stream with a boiling bow wake. The air was filling from the S. George, being farthest up the course and closest to the new wind got it first and took off. Gradually, oh so gradually, it filled in all the way to shore and everyone was underway. Shahe, knowing the shift was due, but in an effort to keep moving, ignored the urge to tack; that decision left him left and last to get the breeze.

George rounded well ahead and was heading for #3 before some got the new wind. Unable to figure out how to blow such a huge lead, George finished seven minutes ahead of the next boat to take the gun and, yes, correct to first. Don's early tack placed him a bit out in the lake before the drifting started, but being to the right paid for him as well. He finished less than two minutes behind Mike and corrected to second. Shahe, caught in a windless patch over by the Little Club, eventually got the wind and made up a lot of time. Fourth to finish, he corrected to third, missing second by a mere thirty seconds.

George, apparently happy it turned into such a lovely evening crossed the finish and went for a sail towards #3. Even though we made sound signals for each boat finishing and we were flying the code "S" for short course, each finisher cleared the finish line and headed to #3 and back around the last legs. Was it a case of "monkey see, monkey do"? Was it just a nice night for a sail?

Next week will be the last race of the first series, even though we got in only five races in this series. In the past, we have done a make up race using the lay Wednesday between the two series, but this year it seems that almost our whole committee made plans to be away on the 18th. Since there will be no one here to run the race, or host the party, we will not be holding a race on the 18th.

Did someone mention party? Yes, we will hold the traditional pizza (and beer) get together at the Littlest Club immediately after the race next Wednesday the 11th. Skippers, please let us know (please respond yes or no) how many of your crew will be attending. It is important to get a count so we may have sufficient nourishment and refreshment on hand. Even if you did not race this series, feel free to join us - but please let us know you are coming. The cost of this event will be covered by passing the hat. Hope to see you there.

June Series: Race 4 ~ June 27, 2018

A nice breeze at the start, W 9 - 12 with a bit of a shift to NNW 4 - 8 late in the race. While the breeze was nice, the sky and radar spoke a different story. The look of clouds provided a bit of a fear factor, but radar indicated it was not serious serious and that it was due to arrive after the finish. At, really after, the finish, we got some rain, but no goffy gusting.

Well, Heeee's back! Don got a decent start, took some time to work his way from under the clouds of canvas blocking the breeze from astern, but when he got on the beat in from #5, he was able to take efficient lines to weather and chase down the maxis who had stretched out on the broad reach from #3 to #5. Don was second to finish, but corrected to first. On the beat in from #5, there was a brief battle of the maxis; Mike and Reggie were rail to rail for a bit, Reggie was footing faster, but Mike was closer to the wind. Mike kept the windward advantage to take line honors and correct to third. Before the start the whole fleet was forming up for in the little bay just upstream of our pier, hoping to get a starboard tack line on the the dog leg mark. Shahe was way in by Rose Terrace picking flowers or something and decided to join the race about a minute late. If he was intentionally delaying his start for clear air, it worked. As the last boat in the fleet on the downwind legs, he avoided all that taking of each other's breeze and steadily climbed through the fleet, reeling in competitors one by one to correct to second.

On a night like this, with the boats sailing in close quarters and changing positions frequently, I enjoy watching the proceedings and trying to figure out who is ahead of whom. I watched as George rounded #5 and shifted my gaze to another situation. When I looked back George was rounding again? Turns out, he hit the mark, was doing a penalty turn, fouled Dale, did another penalty turn and re rounded ... or something, it is still not clear what happened - to me or apparently to the crew of Conundrum. Dale was so upset he forgot the course - again! - turning at the yellow to skip the orange. He returned to the course when he overheard Brad & Sean "discussing" whether they should follow him.

A reminder: when you have to cancel the hitting of a mark or some other foul (port/starboard, etc) you need to do your penalty turn as soon as possible, without interfering with other boats.

For strategy: the forecast did call for a shift to N around 8:00 and knowing that, getting to the right on the beat in from #5 was technically a good plan. However, since all the water, inshore and off, was flat and there seemed to be more air offshore, sailing over to use the shift paid off less dramatically than I expected.

Next week we will be racing on the Fourth. You may know that our first race was on the Fourth, in 1976 as part of the Bicentennial celebration. The participants liked the event so much, GPBC's sailing series became a thing.

June Series: Race 3 ~ June 21, 2018

Race abandoned for lack of wind.

June Series: Race 2 ~ June 13, 2018

Finally, we seem to have reached the end of what George calls "Indian Winter" (kinda the polar opposite of Indian Summer ... think about it) A shifting, gusting breeze 7 - 19 NW, WNW, W under a bright sky with pleasant temps made for a fast trip around the long course.

Before the start, I was guessing that the race would belong to the maxi-boats, expecting that the longer legs would let the waterlines and higher hull speeds bring them around the course well ahead of the rest of the fleet. I was wrong. While the maxis were able to get up some speed on the off wind legs, they were less threatening on the upwind legs. The real story was Shahe, the giant killer. With flat water, enough reaching and taking some great lines on the beats, Shahe was able to stay up with the big boys. From our observation point, the lifts (more on this later) he was using on the last beat almost had him finishing ahead of Mike, who took the gun. Shahe did correct to first - by something like two minutes! Don H. got a bit buried in the pack a few times, but was able to stay close enough to correct to second. Just over a minute out of second was the second Second Wind, with Bob and a crew that likes the gusty conditions.

Dale, apparently taking retirement a bit too literally, decided to take a senior discount by turning for #3 at the yellow, skipping a portion of the course - thus the DNF.

About the shifts: From the dock, we noticed on the beat from #3 to the finish that boats on the same tack were, at times differing in heading significantly. It seemed to depend on how far they were to our left or right. At one point, Shahe was to our right on a heading directly to the finish. Mike, to our left, on the same tack, at the same time, was on a heading taking him to the Little Club. As Shahe moved from downstream to upstream of us, he began to get knocked to Mike's heading. It made me wonder if tacking on that knock would have brought him in even earlier. My point is that in a shifting breeze it is important to watch the compass (or the tree line if your compass is covered) while beating to be able to work out the lifts and knocks. There is a lot to gain if you can respond quickly to the shifts and tack on the knocks.

June Series: Race 1 ~ June 6, 2018

A bright evening with wind from ESE 7, gusting 11 and shifting more S half way through the race. As bright as it was, we on the dock were wondering if we were having an unscheduled eclipse as the light suddenly began to fade - turns out it was just Reggie's 52 ft rig and 768 sq ft of sail blocking the sun.

With two boats over early and restarting, George took the start and lead around the course until a ponderous, too wide gybe at the dog leg mark allowed Mike with a full head of steam and apparently feeling like his boat shrunk over the winter to round the mark like a dinghy and make a pass right the finish line. Don, wanting to join the fun reeled in a 20 second deficit to finish overlapped. Anyone who says watching a sailboat race is like watching paint dry has not seen a finish like that one. Don, after having to restart from over early, corrected to first, George second, and Mike third.

Dale was fairly well along from #5 to #3 when the wind shifted and managed to correct only a minute out of third. The boats already around benefited. The further back they were the more the shift adversely affected them.

This year, the 4th of July falls on a Wednesday. The question of whether to move the date comes up every seven years or so, and we have done both. It is difficult to know if we will lose more participants keeping the date or moving it, but unless there is an overwhelming outcry, I say we stay on the schedule.

Also, next week, the second race of the series, so, weather permitting, **we will be sailing the long course to #7**. Watch for the flag signal. If we fly the code "S" (white field around a blue square) then we will be sailing to #3. If the course is further shortened, we will take times and give sound signals on the first pass through the start/finish line.