

The Continuing Adventures of the Flaming Chihuahua (CL16 #523)

Andrew & I mulled over attending the PMG CL16 Can AM Regatta in Hilton Beach for the better part of July. We had to balance the opportunity of what promised to be some fine sailboat racing in our trusty CL16 against the 1600 km of mind-numbing driving in a Black air-condition-less truck. I was sold, but it took a little innovative thinking (bribery) to coax the crew. With the Rogers Cup Tennis Tournament on at York University on the Thursday, I had just the ticket to win him over.

So we loaded up the Flaming Chihuahua (Chewie now for short) and headed out early Thursday morning to watch Nadal get smoked by Berdych and a few other excellent tennis matches. Did you know first serves can clock in at 220 km/h? We then tacked up to Barrie for the evening which gave us a shorter reach to Hilton Beach the next day.

Thanks to advice from NCYC Commodore Mason Phelps, we also booked in at the excellent newly opened Hilton Beach Inn (100m from Marina) which saved us 120 km of driving back-and-forth to the SOO each night. Only drawbacks were the lack of a monster waterslide and Tim Horton's withdrawal - but we survived (smile).

The first competitors we ran into pulling in was the Kupers family from Toronto and their next generation guide-dog in training. The pup is a Golden Doodle (picture a Retriever having a really bad hair day). John and Laura were just as pumped as we were for the racing to start the next day.

We also met another Wayfarer team from Toronto -- Mike Codd & Kirk Iredale. I remembered Mike from my youth as being teamed up with the legendary George Blanchard.

We learned that Al Schonborn and Marc Bennett had put on a racing clinic earlier in the day which we were sorry we missed. We did see a number of competitors moving Jib tracks, building bridles and making mast rack measurements. I wondered in my mind if that might actually set a few of the competitors back with last minute adjustments to their rigs (...or would it).

We also found that Colin and Heather used Thursday to add a beautiful Blue stripe to their CL #929. I asked Colin what kind of high-tech Epoxy paint he used --- he replied "Tremclad".



Saturday morning dawned with a very light wind. The 18 registered boats headed slowly out to a postponed start. The race committee then fired off a starting sequence when a few promising ripples appeared. Chewie started part-way down the line mainly to ensure clear air. The fleet slowly made its way to the weather mark with the dog finding a few small puffs and lifts along the way. We felt pretty good about our boat speed even though the dog hates the drifters.

Uncle Al found the weather mark first with only a minute to spare in the 1 hour time limit (*groan*). The dog rounded in a tight gaggle of boats in 7th where the committee shortening to 2 legs ("**one more leg**"). Uncle Al & Marc claimed this race with Mike & Kirk just behind in 2nd. We did have an exciting downwind photo finish with the Hills (Hagar) & Kip/Anne Sylvester (C-Ya) to settle for a 6th place.

After a quick sailors lunch, we were lucky enough for the wind to swing SE and fill in a little to start the second race. The Committee set a Windward-Leeward. Personally, I dislike the Windward-Leewards in dinghies. I am always paranoid of the dead-downwind legs when it feels like the entire fleet is catching up to you.

The dog got a decent start but then fell into the teens by going too far right up the first beat. (Skipper note: do not go to the shore on next beat). Downwind paranoia was not warranted as we hauled back in a few boats on the leg. Next upwind leg we found ourselves again on the shore side and again lost ground.

Fortunately, the weather continued to build to hiking weather which the dog loves and we were able to make it back up to a 6th place on the final beat (up the middle). We had another photo-finish just edging out the Kupers.

Uncle Al left us all behind in this one. Becky Sylvester & Kim Wood (E-Racer) claimed 2nd place. You could hear the Yahoo !! from a mile downwind.

In the 3rd race, the Committee went back to the triangle (thanks). The dog pounded out a bang-on start and never looked back. We got to the weather mark just on the rudder posts of Uncle Al & Wayfarer convertees Andrew Haill & Dave Hansman. We held this position thru the rest of the race to claim a respectable 3rd place.

Synopsis for the day: We might be able to convert a few of these Wayfarer sailors. A few of the locals are quite fast this year. Don't go right. Time to eat.

Sunday morning showed potential of being another drifter. With the tow-boats in action we headed out for a start. For Race 4, we got going in very spotty North winds. The oscillations were not at all predictable and the holes were deep. When it finally became obvious that the wind was slowly clocking to the right, the dog was way out on the left side and we sewerred ourselves bad. The dog could do no right in this race.

We worked to try to paw our way back up in the fleet but with limited success. The fleet did compact itself near the finish line and the wind then dropped right off giving us some hope of a miracle -- but not this time. As crew Andrew noted – this was to be our throw-out (we hoped).

Race 5 for the Hilton Cup was looking iffy. Over lunch, the wind did clock around to the West as hoped but was light and sporadic. The hopeful race committee fired a start sequence and the wind immediately died.

We could then see a new wind advancing from the south as a bold solid line. About a minute after the gun went, the wind line caught the pin end where Colin & Heather were sitting all alone. They took off like a rocket leaving the rest of the fleet wallowing at the start line. The crew of the dog cheered them on as it looked like they were given a gift from above. Finally the wind line moved over and the fleet got to head out.

The wind came up fairly strong and oscillating regularly which the dog shines in. We worked our way to Windward and got to the weather mark in **1st** place followed closely by the Kupers. The spectator fleet was cheering exuberantly. The dog advanced its lead somewhat down the 2 reaches and started feeling a bit like a prized Greyhound.



On the next up-wind leg, the expert skills of Uncle Al & local skipper Jim Hill overtook us at the weather mark. The dog regained the lead down the run, but this time with 5 boats nipping at its heels at the corner.

The final upwind leg was going to be an exciting race. Unfortunately, the gusts were getting to over-power stage and the feathering necessary cost the dog a drop to 5th place.

The race was still on though for the Hilton Cup. Local racer Jim Hill had the lead right to the finish line over Uncle Al, but then Jim slipped into his boat during a tack which cost him the few precious boat lengths that Al & Marc needed to snatch the victory. Man was that an exciting finish!!

So, disappointed in losing such a strong lead in the final race, but happy to still have been in the hunt, the dog headed back to the harbour to lick its wounds.

Uncle Al & Marc won the Regatta and the respect of all the competitors with an impressive string of 5 bullets. The dog got to count a 6-6-3-(15)-5 for a 7th place finish overall and enough prize money to cover the gas home.

A quick awards ceremony and an excellent spread of food put on by the Tilt-N-Hilton and we were off to Sudbury for the night.

Regatta Synopsis: It was fun. This is a beautiful place to sail. Uncle Al & Marc sure go upwind fast. The dog is going to have to learn how to get in-board sheeting to work to stay competitive. Maybe Santa will bring new sails for Christmas. Tremclad Rust Paint works on Fiberglass.

Crew Andrew never did get the chance to buy Marc Bennett that beer he owed him from last year (Marc always seemed to have a full glass in his hand). Guess we'll have to come back next year to make good ...

Thanks to Hilton Beach, PMG, & NCYC - you again out-did yourselves.

.... Steve & Andrew Macklin - CL16 #523 – Flaming Chihuahua