

Lake Ontario 300

The Greatest Yacht Race on the Lakes

Tales from Cheekee Monkee

Posted on July 22, 2010 by david.k.johnson

Don walton relates his adventures on Cheekee Monkee:

Another sailing adventure, this time aboard Ron White's highly modified 33' foiling F31 racing trimaran 'Cheekee Monkee' in the Lake Ontario 300 long distance race last Saturday. To put the record straight, here's the short story of what happened...."the REST of the story"

A few hours into the race, we were leading the entire 198 boat LO 300 fleet, after starting under spinnaker with the other multihulls in the last division. 'The Monkee' was dialed in and loving the conditions with speeds of 20+ knots in the building breeze as we literally flew thru the entire fleet of monohulls.... exciting sailing! We stuffed the bows a few times, then reduced to a single reefed main, jib and screecher. Wind clocked further and we set the chute again. A series of line squalls with hail were moving through and we doused the chute. Mike and I were on the net wrestling it into the turtle when we were hit suddenly with a particularly violent blast from behind. Monkee buried the leeward ama as Ron blew the traveller and mainsheet and Ryan lost rudder steering. Mike and I were in a firehose of spray as monkee did a rather violent quick capsize...an Oh sh** moment!

A bit of bother as I was trapped under the trampoline as she went over. The auto inflate Mustang harness did it's thing but prevented me from diving down to clear myself from a tangle of underwater spinnaker and lines. However, Mike had scrambled onto the overturned side and was there with knife to cut a few lines to free me...guess I owe him big 😊 (Note...seemed like a good idea, but I'm no longer a fan of auto inflate harnesses on fast multihulls). Ron fell against the boom on his way across and was winded, but in no time we were all safely out of the water on the overturned hulls. She was floating high and we proceeded to open the emergency compartment to retrieve handheld VHF, EPIRB, GPS and emergency tools. We activated the EPIRB and fellow racing trimaran, 'Proclivity', stood by as we contacted coastguard to report and arrange rescue.



We were about 20 miles offshore southeast of Whitby, so it would be a few hours until rescue. We sent the standby trimaran (thanks Colin) on to resume racing and we proceeded to cut an access hole in the main hull to retrieve personal gear, food and water. We jokingly handed the hatchet to Ron to take out his frustration as he axed into the hull and we neatly sawed a hole to allow us inside.

Coastguard advised that an auxiliary coast guard rescue vessel from Whitby would be dispatched to our reported position. We subsequently learned of other carnage and dismastings in the fleet with reports of winds over 50 knots. Coastguard auxiliary arrived and stood by as we, one by one, jumped in and swam to catch their heaving line and be hauled aboard. Funny story here, it was rather rough at this time and one of the volunteer coasties was at the rail hurling his cookies as we swam up to the boat....gave a new meaning to 'heaving line'..... 😊

We were another few hours bashing our way ashore aboard the coasties boat and they dropped us at Whitby Yacht Club where there were other race casualties.

Ryan and I immediately (well, after a beer or two), jumped the GO train to retrieve vehicles and the boat trailer back in Port Credit, while attempts were made to arrange salvage for the next day.

We found a fishing charter boat captain and his pal with a 37' Silverton sport flybridge called Fishn Fun with big inboard engines and were off searching by 10:00 AM next morning, after scrambling around town to find diving gear and additional line for our righting bridles, etc. We received updated GPS and satellite PIB reports by cell phone from the still activated EPIRB which we had lashed to the upturned hull. Arrived on site...now about 25 miles offshore...a couple of hours later.

We all have experience in how to right a capsized tri but the fish head boys were sorta shaking their heads at us crazy rag baggers....but they were good ol' boys and game to give it a try and put a few bucks in their pockets. The plan was well discussed by this time and we went to work rigging bridles, righting lines, and preparing the boat. If all went well she would right herself bow over stern by towing her hard backwards. If this failed we would have to dive and cut the rig free.

We were in about 500 feet of water. All was set, and we put the plan to work.

Well, the sight was awesome, and Ron caught it on blackberry video as Cheekee Monkee reared up and over as Capt George applied full power. The carbon fibre rig remained in tact, although the high tech sails were shredded and looking pretty poor. Looked like the Black Pearl!! Those who have seen the clip are impressed and wide eyed....and the dialogue is epic 😊

[Righting Video](#)

We started the long tow to Whitby, and were back in the harbour by about seven PM where we were treated to drinks, dinner and entertainment with our new fishing friends capt George and his down east pal Calvin and wife Heather aboard their boat...they had just snagged the biggest catch of the year.....!



Cheekee Monkee survived with minor damage, although doubtful she will be fully repaired and back racing this season.

The crew agreed we'll be back to finish the job...just another adventure with some excellent sailors and friends!

To the best of my recollection...



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