

FALL/WINTER 2023

SHACKLES & CRINGLES



Photo Credit: Pete Mather

Sunset in Thornbury, Ontario during Canadians Championship October 2023



The Commodore

It was over a year ago when I said, in a supposedly sober moment, "Sure I'll be Commodore." Now, 12 months later, I'm trying to get myself fired from this position. It's been a busy stretch! I kept telling myself to keep a journal of all the great things the 2022/23 CAA executive accomplished. Maybe next year I'll do that. Rest assured we have been busy doing good things for the Albacore class. I'm very grateful to my fellow board members for their time devoted to their fellow Albacore mates. Thank-you!

What have we been doing you ask? Running training sessions for rules and racing, sponsoring anyone with a heartbeat to take a race committee training course, re-starting the Shackles publication(class newsletter), posting on social media, re-building the class website, managing membership and class financials, hounding a UK boat manufacturer to bring our new CAA sponsored Albacore build to life, and finally, running the Ontario and Canadian Albacore Championships.

It was great to see the increased participation level on the water this year. Friday night races saw over 40 boats on the starting line. What other one-design class in Canada can boast about that? Regattas also saw an uptick in participation, with 25 boats trailering to the Canadians in Thornbury plus one local.

Community clubs per usual were maxed out delivering sailing lessons and bringing new recruits to the sport we love. Yeah!

So, what's up for 2023/24? More of the same but even more dialed in. Help us get better and give us feedback on what we can improve. Remember that board members don't sign up for life. We welcome new recruits - we need you! In fact we need a new board member to take on the role of running the Canadians. Please consider giving back to the class you enjoy. Key skill sets are giving of your time and a good attitude.

Sadly, our Albacore world lost a long-tenured participant this year. Dave Weaver at age 83 passed following a long fight with cancer. David's Albacore racing days go back to the sixties. He stopped racing in the eighties but remained committed to the class playing a role with the IAA as Specifications Committee

Chairman spanning four decades. David earned the respect of his peers for his contributions and his stand-up character. He will be dearly missed.

As we head into winter, I can't help but already feel the pent-up excitement for the next sailing season. Till then!





2024 RACE SCHEDULE

THE MIDWINTERS ARE **EALRY!**
JANUARY 19-21, 2024



The 2024 racing season kicks off with the **Midwinters at the Clearwater Community Sailing Center** in Florida. This is a great venue to experience racing in the Gulf - not to mention a fantastic club. Start making your plans now - **it's seven weeks away!** Sadly camping at the club will not be allowed so book your hotels early to get a good rate. Register here. https://www.regattanetwork.com/event/27207#_home



The Internationals 2025 will be Held at the Hampton Yacht Club, Virginia from October 11-17th, 2025



THIS IS CLEARWATER SAILING CLUB.
RACING SURROUNDED BY PALM TREES IS
REALLY A THING.

Remembering David Weaver

"I was very sorry to hear the news because I had great respect for him going back to the early 90's when at the Kingston Worlds he measured the red Alb pretty much every day... even making me do an afloat buoyancy test! His contribution to the Albacore Class worldwide has been immense, seeing us through many a problem. His leadership of the International Technical Committee was impressive. We had many hour-long telephone conversations. He was a super negotiator who made you feel that your point of view was important." Michael McNamara

"The passing of David Weaver has reminded us all of how important and instrumental David was in the success and growth of the class. I believe that we all hold a common interest but we should always remember those who have contributed and helped create and guide what we continue to enjoy." Andy Pierce, UK Albacore Association

"A great guy to deal with. I think we only met face-to-face once or twice. One time in Toronto Peter and I showed him the albacore hull measurement jig - probably in the early 2000s. The vast majority of discussion with him was about albacore class rules which he was deeply committed to - expending significant time even though he had not sailed in years. A sad loss." Barney Harris



David Weaver & George Roth in 1983 at the Conestoga Sailing Club

"In the good old days, the friendliness of the people, the quality of competition, the simplicity of the boat and its high performance were its best features...we need a cadre of champions...who will help promote the class, and get some of those old albacores out. So, there are people out there and the boats are out there. We just have to get them together."

David Weaver in conversation March 2023

The Canadians Recap

by Mia Brandt & Paul Clifford



Fire & Ice: Paul & Mia @ The Canadians, 2023

Just like a star athlete executing a perfect play, the 2023 Albacore Canadian Championships appeared effortless and flawless in every way. The event was everything a regatta should be—set in a gorgeous location, competitive and unpredictable, fun, social, and entertaining, even silly at times! And given that weather predictions called for almost no wind for three days, along with a forecast of rain arriving just in time to annoy us as we were packing up our boats to return home when all was said and done, it really did seem as if the regatta organizers had influence with the big man/woman upstairs.

Thanks to Raines for suggesting beautiful Thornbury for our venue. To me—maybe it's just because I'm a Yankee—it looked so exotic, like Wales. The lush green bluff and expanse of Georgian Bay made me feel like I had traveled somewhere really special. (Paul didn't see what all my excited raving was about, but that's why our boat is called "Fire and Ice". He's a little more, um, subdued. And Canadian.)

We arrived at the Thornbury Yacht Club on Thursday, the day prior to the start of the three-day regatta, pleasantly surprised to find a decent breeze blowing, and Barney Harris rigging his boat in an empty parking lot. We rushed to get out on the water for some practice with him in the wind, given the grim (light) forecast for the weekend. It was a beautiful clear afternoon with the wind blowing onshore from the northeast. You'd figure that would be a pretty steady direction, but surprisingly, as we went bow to bow away from shore, we noticed swings of as much as thirty degrees. And another omen...the wind started to weaken.

The first day of racing saw the light air predictions come true, with some big shifts occurring. But, notwithstanding the shiftiness, the top three boats were pretty evenly matched, Raines and Stephanie winning the first race, Darren and Mabel, the second, and Barney and Ernest, the third. Throughout the regatta these three, though sometimes burned by sailing into a hole, or hitting the wrong side of a shift, seemed almost always to find a way to climb back to a top finish. The dramatic and unpredictable swings and the spotty patches of wind meant there was a lot of mixing of positions on the race course. It wasn't unusual to find the eventual leaders back in the pack early on in a race - and some of the trailing boats were often up there around the first few marks, even ending up with remarkably good finishes.

The fourth race was shortened due to a dying breeze, and a shout out to Ryan and Andrea who played the upwind leg perfectly and came third. In the same vein, the fifth race saw Adam and his five-year-old son, Cole, leading much of the way, and eventually finishing a close third. In each race though, Darren and Mabel squeezed out a bullet and took a slight lead into the last day.

On the way out to the course, the last day's skies were darker, the wind had picked up and we were even hiking prior to the start. But it didn't last and the third day's races became light and shifty as well. Raines and Stephanie took two of the last three races, with Barney and Ernest winning the other. But it wasn't enough to knock the eventual winners, Darren and Mabel, out of their lead as they exhibited remarkable consistency in finishing second in each of the last three races.

Throughout the rest of the fleet, racing was very competitive and fun. Positions were constantly changing and one really had to be observant of where the wind was moving and where the pressure might appear (or disappear). It would be safe to say that everyone there was mystified more often than they were clairvoyant.



Mabel organized a Ph.d-level games night on albacore history with help from quiz hosts Stephanie & Ralph

And then, in a dramatic fashion to end the series, the final race was called off and the sailors sent in pronto. A water spout had been sighted nearby and a dark, foreboding cloud front was approaching the racecourse. We all skeddaddled into shore, and the Albacore fleet unrigged at unprecedented speed. But enough about sailing! There is more to life than racing...like good times, food, and friendship. A prime example of that was when the incomparable Dave Harris stepped in, spoiling us with mounds of fresh blueberries, delicious pancakes, and, again, to me, a Yankee, the shock of expensive 100% Canadian maple syrup. OK, I (Mia) really get sick of the inevitable Canadian “We’re better than you” comparisons to the United States that I endure, even in my marriage to the love of my life. But really. In my country, when I am served pancakes I am assaulted with syrup the ingredients of which are as follows (I looked this up just for you!): Corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, water, cellulose gum, caramel color, salt, natural and artificial flavor, sodium benzoate and sorbic acid (preservatives), and sodium hexametaphosphate. Yay Dave Harris! Yay Canada!

Every night was a super fun group dinner, great weather and atmosphere, and the last night’s games and quiz was so well researched it was as if Stephanie Stalinsky, Mabel, and Ralph had gotten PhDs in Albacore History, Science, and Culture. The contestants weren’t half bad themselves, and prizes were won by a wide range of shouting and shrieking participants.

And speaking of prizes, in addition to working her tail off to put on an incredible regatta, who knew that Stephanie Mah had an inner Santa Claus she needed to express? There were enough presents and prizes that it felt like Christmas morning both Quiz Night and during the awards presentation! A particularly brilliant touch—both validating and cathartic—were the “Skipper” and “Crew (really the Skipper)” team T-shirts given out to the six married couples who competed together in the regatta.

Thank you Steph and everyone who made this all SO much fun! And congratulations to every sailor who attended!



*Raines Koby & Stephanie Ma
In Second Place*



*Darren Monster & Mabel Chan
The Champions*



*Barney Harris & Earnest Ayukawa
in Third Place*



This year's Canadian Championships brought out six racing couples. We asked these dynamic duos what makes their partnership in the boat work - one couple has been racing together for 43 years! Find out what it takes to race together, stay together and live to tell the tale.

Richard Spirk & Pam Leeuwestein



Credit Brian Morris

How long have you been racing together?

We met in the fall of 2016 and raced together for the first time at the Ontario's in June 2017. We both grew up sailing and racing dinghies. It was only natural that we took up racing together. As with any new sailing partner, it took time to learn to trust each other in the boat. And the helm needed to be trained out of making balance adjustments himself as he would in his Laser.

Do you argue in the boat? If yes, what do you argue about?

Yes. Apparently, the crew doesn't appreciate being solidly whacked in the back of the head. Even though it was unintentional.

Have you learned new things about each other through sailing?

The crew has learned that the helm has a reckless streak. The helm has discovered he can learn a lot from the crew and that the crew is good at keeping the helm on an even keel.

Great CREW

How about one romantic sailing moment on the boat?

Always great to share a kiss while hiking out and planing. Sunset and moonlight sails are always nice too.

And one not-so-romantic moment?

The aforementioned accidental hand-to-head incident.



What do you do well as racing partners? What don't you do well?

We each know where to be in the boat, it just feels natural and smooth. We understand each other's roles and focus on what needs to get done. The crew is great at breaking the helm out of a funk. The helm has a good feel for the boat and reading wind shifts. Switching positions in the boat doesn't go so well. We are a bit entrenched in our roles, so it just feels awkward.

What was your takeaway from racing the Canadians together?

Hitting the crew in the head = bad. For a variety of reasons, we don't race enough together, but when we do, it's thoroughly enjoyable, particularly at the beautiful venue we had for the Canadians. We had the opportunity to adjust the boat set-up (with the help of friends from the fleet) and fine-tune the way we sail the boat. We are particularly happy with how we made adjustments to how we sailed upwind (the helm didn't pinch and let the boat take speed). We are gradually improving our downwind sailing and making better and faster decisions together.

Any advice for couples looking to race together?

It needs to be fun. We sail the best when we listen to each other. It never goes well if the helm doesn't react to the crew's observations or at least acknowledge and discuss them. Of course, once a decision has been made, then there is no debate and we move forward, for better or for worse. We choose to learn from our mistakes, but not focus on them. There are far more decisions to make in a race or regatta and hashing out the previous race is not going to help us while sailing the current race.



Lynn Shannon & Richard Clayton



How long have you been racing together?

We have been racing together since the first season after we met – 1985 (38 years). We met at the Albacore Canadian Championships at Geneva Park in September of 1984. We were members of separate Community Clubs in Toronto.

Do you argue in the boat? If yes, what do you argue about?

Argue? Yes! About everything – where to start on the line, when to tack, what we are eating for lunch, where is the wind, and what will it do next? Etc. What is important is to resolve these conflicts and focus on sailing and racing.

Have you learned new things about each other because of sailing?

Yes. It places stress on your relationship that can expose the cracks. Lynn is more competitive than Rick who is more analytical. It is important to recognize the differences and use them to complement your results.

How about one romantic sailing moment on the boat?

After completing a race with a result that meets or exceeds our expectations, we complement each other and have a kiss.

And one not-so-romantic moment?

Dumping in a regatta in the Outer Harbour when Lynn was pregnant. Rick yelled at her for not dry dumping. She waited for Rick to right the boat and then slid into the boat over the transom. Attitude readjustment ensued.



What do you do well as racing partners? What don't you do well?

The best part? You know what the strengths and weaknesses of the other person are. We all have our limitations and it is also important to know your own. A spouse may be less restrained in telling you this.

What was your takeaway (s) from racing the Canadians together?

We exceeded our expectations.

Any advice for couples looking to race together?

There is life outside sailing and racing which is more important. Always remember this. If sailing together impedes this, it requires a re-think about continuing. For us, having the time together in the boat while balancing raising children and busy careers, made us stronger as a couple and allowed us to grow.



Jamie Isbester & Jennifer Miller



Credit Pete Mather

How long have you been racing together?

Since 2012. It was Jeni's first time dinghy racing, indeed, her first time in a sailing dinghy.

How did it start?

We live in Berkeley, California but Jamie's family has a cottage on Georgian Bay where he has been sailing Albacores since he was a kid. Jeni and Jamie had been dating for a year, so it was time to stress-test the relationship. What better way to do that than with the sharp edges of the centreboard trunk? The local sailing club has two races every Saturday. One Saturday in July, we rolled the boat over from its winter resting place, put in the mast, towed it to the race location (the races are in whatever bay is closest to the after-race party), anchored the tow boat, rigged up the Albacore, and hit the starting line. After the first race, Jeni said "Wow, that was a lot of fun, but I am exhausted." Then Jamie mentioned the second race...

Have you learned new things about each other through sailing?

Jamie has discovered that Jeni likes to win. Jeni has discovered that Jamie thinks that a romantic dinner involves using the salt and pepper shakers as the marks and a butter knife for wind direction, in order better to discuss the role of Rule 18 of the Racing Rules of Sailing in a starboard mark rounding. Jeni has been struck by Jamie's attention to detail - not Jeni's strong suit. Jamie has seen what fast learner Jeni is - the Hermione of Albacore racing. Perhaps more importantly, we have learned things about about ourselves as a couple: how to be complementary in performing a complicated task together and how to enjoy each other's contribution.

How about one romantic sailing moment on the boat?

Gentlemen don't talk about such things. Having said that, we must ask: have you ever been on an Albacore? Just how romantic can one get while being garrotted by a boom vang in a boat that will dump if you look at it wrong?



And one not-so-romantic moment?

Such moments involve Jamie being an idiot. Jamie would prefer not to discuss and Jeni is too diplomatic to mention them.

What do you do well as racing partners? What don't you do well?

Since the pandemic, we have been able to spend a lot of each summer at Georgian Bay, working remotely. The weekly sailing races are a time we carve out to spend with each other without any other distractions. There is also a really strong social life built around sailing, involving friends Jamie has known for more than 50 years and friends we have only just met but with whom we share a love of having wet butts, cold feet, and bruised shins. As racing partners: we value and respect each other's contributions and roles, while each understanding that the other is going to make mistakes. We are getting better at anticipating each other's actions so that we can be more nimble and consistent in our boat handling. What we don't do well: the great thing about sailing is that we can always get better, unlike, other sports where our best days are behind us. We are still working on a lot of things: e.g., roll tacking, calling the lay line. Winds in Georgian Bay can be really shifty, so we are trying to understand both localised phenomenon and synoptic factors. Jeni is not into the RRS so in tight quarters, her tactical advice tends to be "watch out" or "don't hit them." We just switched to the high aspect North jib and we cannot seem to get that sail to work in light air, so there is some tuning to be done. And as noted below, the boat is not dialed in for upwind in light air generally.

What was your takeaway from racing the Canadians together?

Most importantly, we really enjoyed the regatta experience - something Jeni had not done before. It was not just the racing, but also the way everyone combined friendliness with seriousness about the sailing. On the water, we found that we had to recalibrate what the Albacore can do. In our home fleet, we generally have boat speed and are competitive. This has made us complacent about tuning and race prep. At the Canadians, we simply did not have the upwind performance needed to be competitive. We have a lot of tuning and race prep to do.

What advice do you have for other couples looking to race together?

Remember that seeing who can go the least slow in an inherently slow, obsolete mode of travel is not a mandatory activity. If you are not having fun, what's the point? It is important to have shared goals and expectations. For instance, our grown daughter was visiting at the time of our season-end regatta this year and she sailed in a couple of the races. Our goal was to make the experience fun for her. She had a blast; goal met; we were pretty happy. Earlier in the summer, we set a goal of winning the July series. Again, it was attainable and shared. We felt good when we met that goal. Overall, we share the goal of constantly improving in an activity we both find stimulating and fun. The Canadians were a great step along that path.

WE
DID
IT!

Paul Clifford & Mia Brandt



How long have you been racing together?

We started dipping our toe into racing together in 2012.

How did it start?

We were first loves in college where Paul was on the racing team. We went our separate ways at age 20 but fell back in love in our late fifties. Paul had stopped sailing after college and devoted himself to the labour movement and I (Mia) had never sailed at all and was dying to. I had to beg Paul to get back into it after a 37-year break from competition, but now he is an addict and of course, I love it too.



Do you argue in the boat?

The first year we were just goofy and silly and having fun. The second year we fought about micromanagement, communication...the usual. Now we rarely fight, but when we do it's about one person thinking the other doesn't trust their judgment.

Have you learned new things about each other through sailing?

I never realized how talented Paul was. He can be a ninja about the wind. And I never realized what a competitive nature he has. I had always done non-competitive versions of sports, like skiing and horseback riding for pleasure so caring about winning, and handling disappointment, was an adjustment for me.



How about one romantic sailing moment on the boat?

I think that even during a race we like to look at each other when the other isn't noticing, and just take in how lucky we are to be together, doing something beautiful and exciting that we both love.

AWW

And one not-so-romantic moment?

I was getting angrier and angrier at Paul as we sailed over to Humber Bay for a regatta on a hot summer day because he wouldn't put on his PFD (I knew I wasn't a good enough skipper to save him if he went in). He finally freaked out and threw the PFD into the water and I said, "What would your mother say if she saw you now?" For some reason that worked, he sailed back to retrieve it, and I felt smugly victorious.

What do you do well as racing partners? What don't you do well?

We've really learned to communicate with each other--like Goldilocks and the Three Bears--not too much, not too little, but just the right amount. We give each other encouragement and compliment each other during the race, and never criticize or tear each other's sailing down. In terms of what we don't do well, we have both faced some health and injury issues in the past few years so neither of us feels as strong and resilient as we would ideally like.



What was your takeaway from racing the Canadians together?

We didn't have much of an opportunity to sail the Albacore together this summer, so the lack of practice showed in that we couldn't quite break into the top three. Also Mia had some really good instincts about the wind shifting that I ignored, much to my regret. Lesson learned.

Any advice for couples looking to race together?

Be positive and respectful. No yelling ever! The skipper needs to involve the crew so it is interesting and a growth experience for both. Remember you are doing this because it's fun. Don't lose it or get overly bent out of shape. Just chill and remember how lucky you are that you don't have to ration your sailing time because your partner is waiting resentfully at home, counting the minutes until you are off the water and catering to them!

Chill

&



Rosie & Ted Mallett



How long have you been racing together?

Yikes, it's been 43 years

Wow!

How did it start?

I took Rosie on a date—as crew to the 1980 TISC regatta. She was on the U of W gymnastics team at the time, so figured she could hang off the side of a boat if necessary. I think we ribboned in one of the races.

Do you argue in the boat?

Not worth arguing about the dumb mistakes we each made under pressure.

Have you learned new things about each other through sailing?

She's pretty competitive, more than me.

How about one romantic sailing moment on the boat?

None we can think of.

And one not-so-romantic moment?

Finding a private place to pee.

What do you do well as racing partners? What don't you do well?

Nice to find a common activity outside the home where we both have to depend on each other. The social life & joint friendships made. We were both pretty nimble and perfected dry dumps, but we generally suck at going upwind in a breeze.

What was your takeaway (s) from racing the Canadians together?

Best ever finish (not accounting for fleet size). First time back in a big regatta in four years for me and 12 for Rosie. Bruises.

Any advice for couples looking to race together?

It's a marathon, not a sprint.



Reflections on the Internationals

by Raines Koby, the boss

If we had won the Internationals I would have made a speech at the prize giving, expressing my gratitude to people, firstly my dear wife who allows me to pursue my ego-driven fantasies of being a sailing champion, and secondly to Steph for hiking her ass off, great crewing and putting up with my idiosyncrasies and as well to other honorable mentions. Well, we didn't win, but we gave it our all and you know I still feel the need to express thanks. I'm bloody lucky to play this game and have wonderful support. Maybe one day I'll make this speech for real. Thanks, Cath, Steph & Co!

Enough of that, this is not supposed to be about me! The Internationals were awesome from a Toronto perspective. We had 6 days of 15-plus knot wind. In fact, it's the first time Steph and I have sailed in winds consistently above 15 knots plus some over 20. While hiking upwind is not fun the planning reaches sure were. Along with the breeze were 15-degree temps, rain, and a bit of sun. The best strategy we made was scoring waterproof fleece-lined Rooster brand toques at the local chandlery when grabbing some boat parts.

34 boats launched from a beautiful public beach adjacent to the host club South Caernarvonshire Yacht Club. It was the height of holiday season so the beach was busy with families thinking 15 degrees and a bit of rain would be just fine for hanging at the beach. Go figure. Tides were 3-4 meters and each night we had to pull our boats higher to avoid being swept away. The two-mile sail out was quick given the breeze, to a patch of ocean we shared only with jellyfish who liked to adjust our underwater foils without notice. The body of water, the Irish Sea facing Dublin, was protected by a peninsula but still allowed ocean swells to sweep the course and combine with a steep chop for an interesting ride.



The race committee made one bad error on day one but were otherwise excellent, with 13 races over 5 days of racing. Start lines were a decent length and close to square, beats challenging and reaches generally always good to plane and/or surf waves. Courses were triangle laps, but two or three races were triangle-sausage and many boats practiced their capsize skills on the runs including us. &^!%^!! I forgot that sailing by the lee in over 20 knots is a bad idea. Stupid.

Neville Herbert sailing with Lewis Fowler were in a class of their own, except on the first day with finishes of 27 and 11. There after they won 5 races and finished top 5 in the rest. So, it became a regatta for second place with us battling in the end with McNamara/Gardiner and Lonsdale/Batterton. We ended up in between them 2 points behind M&G. Our would of, could of, should list of course is deep but hats off to Michael McNamara, at a young 80 years old, sailing in the breeze and simply making very few mistakes. Impressive to say the least. Fellow Canuks Henry Pedro and Guy Tipton finished 7th.

Neville won sailing with Lewis's dad Mark at the last Internationals in 2019 Shelburne NS. Decent DNA in that family. The team of Barney Harris and David Byron reunited for this event and looking for their sixth Internationals title were foiled by breakdowns in a chartered boat. Pretty sure the results would have been different if Barney had shipped his Hapco. Would of, could of, should of.

The next Internationals are in the US in 2025. Three options are being considered: Newport, Chesapeake, and Florida. Brits seem keen on Florida and plan to pack a container full. See you there.

The Internationals Recap

by Henry Pedro, Shelburne Sailing Club

“How far is it from Gatwick to Witney?” I asked.

“Mate, you don’t want to go to Gatwick, go to Heathrow”.

“But it’s cheaper to fly charter to Gatwick.”

“So what? You’ll have to go to Montreal or Toronto first.”

We hadn’t even committed ourselves and we were already arguing.

I mentioned to some friends that I wanted to make a run at the Albacore Internationals and after remarking that it was a good idea, they asked who I’d sail with. “Guy Tipton,” I responded.” To which the inevitable question was “Do you think you two will do well? Who’s helming?” I would reply: “I think we’ll do really well if we don’t kill each other during the week.”

So it began.

We all booked tickets to (ahem) Heathrow direct from Halifax (good move), arriving around 20:30 local time, then take a bus to Oxford where we’d get picked up by Guy’s sister Lisa who’d drop us off at his mum Jan’s place in Witney. Fortunately, that set of plans was executed perfectly and on time, and we arrived around 10:15 or so at Jan’s house – just enough time for a cheeky drink and then attempt to get some sleep. Our plan involved getting to England a week early so as not to rush. We (Guy, my wife Amanda, and me) would be on holiday for a few days before the stresses of a world championship. (another good move) Next, we’d need to find our way to Maidenhead Sailing Club to pick up our charter boat. Backing up a few months, I had attempted to drum up interest in a sea container to transport our boats abroad, but there was little (like zero) interest.



where the wind is wild...Abersoch, Wales

An American container was in the works but not much progress was being made there either, so I started asking about charter boats. Fortunately for us, John Woffinden, who had come to the Shelburne Internationals in 2019 offered me his new-ish Ovington Albacore to use, and that was like a gift. (Thanks John!) Maidenhead is a sailing club. It's also a decommissioned quarry. A gravel pit. About the size of a gravel pit as opposed to a lake. That is, in 10 knots of breeze you can manage a maximum 30-second beat before needing to change tacks to avoid land, a shoal, an island (there are three) or some other hazard.

It's literally a puddle 500m long by 275m wide with about 275 boats parked beside it and a nice little clubhouse. The day we arrived there was a youth learn-to-sail camp underway and we decided to stick it in the water to get acquainted with the sail controls, do a few (a lot) of manoeuvres, some tacks, gybes, rig adjustments, and get a little instruction on the adjustable rigging from John, who followed us around in a motorboat. Instruction time over, we packed up the boat under close watch from John, zipped it in its protective cover and headed back to Witney.



We planned to arrive in Abersoch several days early to get rigged and do some real-time, real-life location practicing, tuning, and adjusting in order to get acquainted with both the boat and the sea conditions in the area. When we arrived, Abersoch Dinghy Week was in full swing. Imagine a white sand beach ½ km long with hundreds of dinghies parked on it interspersed amongst holidaymaking beach-loving families. It was incredible. So many boats, so many people, and zero bickering or complaining from sunbathers or swimmers (or sailors for that matter). All of this activity was being handled by the race committees of South Caernavonshire Yacht Club, itself beautifully perched atop a cliff overlooking St. Tudwall's Bay and Islands, Views of the Snowdonia Mountains and of course, those beaches.

We got the boat rigged and started going through the running rigging and measuring the standing rigging. Guy was fastidious about the adjustable rig, endlessly asking "If we don't do A and B when we gybe, what's to stop the mast from breaking?"

Me: "Well we will have to do A and B or the mast could break."

Reply: "That's not good enough, mate, we can't break a mast."

Me: "We won't break a mast."

Guy: "Hey Barney, what's to stop our mast from breaking if we don't do A & B prior to the gybe?"

Barney: "You'll break the mast."

Guy: "Mate, that's not good enough."

Barney: "Breaking a mast is a real possibility."

Guy: "Hey David, what's to stop our mast from breaking..."

David: "You guys need to be careful. Masts can break over here."

After satisfying himself that he could mitigate the possibility of mast breakage we went out for a few sails and figured out how to get speed out of the rig, how to transition from beat to reach to run, how to tack without tripping over the rigging, and how to gybe without (ahem) breaking the mast. All good stuff from two guys who have never actually raced in the same boat together.

First day of the regatta. One practice race followed by two counting races. We launch, do some pre-start manoeuvres, get ready for a quick beat – apply the vang and something goes “ping!”. Well, more like “pow” and we lose all vang tension. We look down and there’s the culprit – a broken gooseneck. Crap. Head straight for shore, trying to hold the front of the boom so as to not tear the mainsail all the while trying to figure out who might have a spare or where we might be able to buy a spare part. I have never broken a gooseneck before. I’ve worn out a few, bent a few brackets, but never broken one. As we approached the beach (an agonizing 30-minute trip) we figured with hundreds of boats on that beach SOMEONE has to have something we can steal (and then own up to later). As we haul out I spot a mast lying on top of an unused catamaran. On closer inspection, it appears to be not only an Albacore mast, but a Selden Albacore mast with exactly the gooseneck we needed. I wasted no time in stealing the part, installing it in our boat, and rushing back onto the course. We actually made it in time for the start of the second race, so we managed to score only one DNS. Later I found out that the mast belonged to Matt Thompson (it was his spare) so I apologized for stealing it, negotiated for the stolen gooseneck and that was that.

I’ve been to some windy races. I recall in 2000 there was a US Nationals at Rehoboth where it blew 25 knots steady with gusts to 30+. I remember a day at the Canadian Championship in Kingston in 1999 where it blew 25 knots. There was that time at Buffalo Canoe Club around 2003 where it blew 20 knots in one race. The Canadian Championship in 2014 where it blew 18-20 knots one day. The 2019 Internationals had planning conditions every single day. But at 14-17 knots on average even that event was not really what I’d call “windy”. And I’ve never been to an event where it blew 18-20+ knots every single day. On day two of the regatta fully half the fleet was upside down mid-race, including us on a stupid move during a gybe (no we did not break the mast).

And so the week wore on. The weather was cool, never really rising above 18°C, although the water temperature was tolerable around 15°C. It was usually overcast, sometimes rainy, and even that cold wet weather did not deter some stalwart beach-goers who put up rain and wind shelters and proceeded to sit at the beach all day in the rain anyway. There were a few sunny days which raised the air temperature above 20°C, which when combined with the windy conditions made for some epic racing and fantastic planing reaches (and some planing runs).

After the dust settled on Tuesday, we found ourselves in 10th place (the final score for the UK Nationals) with 9th place a possibility later in the week and 8th place just out of reach unless something drastic happened. Wednesday was a lay day so we thought we'd recharge, do some sightseeing, rest, and reflect. Thursday came and there was no stop to the wind. We managed a 4th and 8th in a wind-shortened day which saw only two races, with a rise into 9th place and 8th still out of reach. Friday, the final day- We were a bit surprised to see many teams deciding to pack it in early due to boat breakages, inability or unwillingness to sail in the wind of the day, and just general fatigue. The Race Committee wanted to do four races to try and catch up to the total race schedule.

Guy and I were ready mentally. Physically we were starting to suffer like many teams but out we went. The first race saw us rounding the top mark in 4th but we fell back to 9th on extremely difficult deep reaches and an unfortunate windward mark hit. The same result on race two minus the mark hit (thanks to a LOT of shouting from Guy in the front of the boat reminding me to round wide due to the current), but then we pulled off a 3rd and 4th in the final two races and we couldn't calculate where we'd finished, only that we'd beaten some of the top teams in those races.

And the result? 7th place! Wow, we didn't think we could do it, and we were five points ahead of the 8th place boat (which was ahead of us earlier in the week) and just two points behind 6th. Oh, if we hadn't hit that mark!! Dammit! Still, 7th place in a Worlds fleet is not too shabby and Guy and I are proud of our achievements.



Shelburne represents! Guy Tipton & Henry Pedro

The sail back to shore after the last race was bittersweet for me. We were certainly glad the week was over – we're all getting old and our bodies were sore and tired. But I was going to miss this type of racing. Sailing top equipment with new sails and an adjustable rig is extremely intoxicating and the reason we spend huge sums of money to travel to places like this to compete. I will miss Abersoch – sure it's a huge tourist trap that empties in the fall and is almost deserted in the off-season, but that beach! And the views! And those winds! And that Club! And the bar in that Club!

Thanks, Abersoch. We'll be back one day!



You've finally made it to the last page of this mega issue of Shackles! This editor's 2024 New Year's resolution?

Shorter Shackles!

A big thank you to the contributors.

The best of the season to you all!

