

Charleston to Bermuda Fleet Making Good Progress— Gryphon Solo Leads

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA (May 19, 2007)—As the fleet of 18 boats competing the biennial Charleston to Bermuda Race continued to move farther off the South Carolina coast, the inevitable spread had begun to settle in. As of 10:00 a.m. EDT Saturday, the lead boat—Open 50 Gryphon Solo skippered by Hugh Piggen —was over 130 miles ahead of the last-place boat, Jack Wood’s Island Packet 40 Zippity Do Dah. According to information available online via [iboatrack](#), Gryphon Solo had covered more than 205 miles since the start, and was making good progress at better than 10 knots in an east-southeasterly direction.

Nova, Mark Weber’s Swan 56, with just four crew on board, was the most southerly positioned boat at that time, roughly 60 miles south of the rhumb line to Bermuda, and 27 miles astern of Gryphon Solo. The most northerly positioned boat, David Guggenheim’s Beneteau 40.7 Piakea, was approximately 6 miles south of the rhumb line, and almost 75 miles astern of the leader.

As of the 10:00 o’clock report, the bulk of the fleet was well into the Gulf Stream, with the leaders just beyond it. According to various weather sources, including one ship traveling nearby, the winds in this general vicinity appeared to be steady at about 14 knots. But the predominant wind direction in that sector of the Atlantic was north-northeast, and various forecasts indicated that the breezes would lighten to about 10 knots, meaning that the fleet leaders’ progress would likely diminish. The same ship cited above reported the wave heights to be just eight feet.

For scoring purposes, the fleet is broken into four different classes. The Exhibition Class includes Gryphon Solo and two catamarans, Teddy Turner, Jr.’s 46-foot Reason and George Reavis’s 41-foot Rahma. Those two multihulls have been engaged in a close battle since the start, and as of the most recent report, Turner and crew were leading Reavis and his team by just 27 miles.

“The winds have filled in nicely from the northeast,” said Turner via satellite phone today. “We have about 25 knots of breeze and we’re luckily able to fetch for now.” Fetch = sail the most direct route to one’s destination.

The remaining classes include Spinnaker Class A with six boats, Spinnaker Class B with six entries, and the Non-Spinnaker Class with three entries. Though it’s still early in the race, the most remarkable performer so far has been Bill Hanckel’s J/120 EmOcean competing in Class A. Though the owner isn’t on board, his son Will is skippering, supported by a crew of racing sailors from Charleston, including Brian Swan in the role of navigator. As of the most recent update, the 40-foot EmOcean was only 37 miles astern of Gryphon Solo, on nearly the same heading averaging 8 knots of boatspeed. About 12 miles to the north of Hanckel and his crew, Buddy Darby’s much larger Swan 70 Luna Danna was averaging just 7.7 knots.

The National Weather Service's forecast for this region offered good news and bad. The wave heights should diminish by early Sunday to about four feet, but the winds will also diminish to 10 knots and less, and should swing more to the east by early Sunday, which doesn't bode well for a fast trip to Bermuda.

Anyone interested in following the progress of the C2B fleet will be able to track the boats by logging on to the event's website www.charlestontobermuda.com and clicking on the iboatrack.com link. Daily updates will also be posted on the site.

The Charleston to Bermuda Race is sponsored by Bermuda Tourism, Gosling's Black Seal Rum, the Fairmont Hamilton Princess, the Charleston Harbor Resort, Bennett-Hofford, and Charleston Boatworks. The event receives critical support from The Royal Bermuda Yacht Club. The race is open to every seaworthy boat 30 feet and longer. Race committee duties for the race are managed by the Charleston Ocean Racing Association.

The owner and organizing authority for the Charleston to Bermuda Race is the South Carolina Maritime Foundation (SCMF). SCMF is a nonprofit 501c3 organization with a mission to offer a unique educational platform for students, encouraging responsibility, teamwork, and other attributes necessary to become future leaders. Other programs include construction of a tall ship, the Spirit of South Carolina, Charleston Race Week, Tall Ships@ Charleston and the Charleston Maritime Festival. Support the Spirit at www.scmaritime.org.



Photo: Keith Morgan

Visit the photo gallery for more pictures of the start!

