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Charleston to Bermuda Race Underway with Fanfare and Clear Skies

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA (May 18, 2007)—With moderate northerly breezes gracing the harbor, and a strong ebb tide sweeping seaward, 18 entries in the sixth edition of the Charleston to Bermuda Race set out to sea at noon today. Shortly after the small brass cannon sounded off the stern of the *Spirit of South Carolina*, the competing boats charged downwind across the starting line, which fittingly stretched from the anchored South Carolina tall ship to the three-masted *Spirit of Bermuda* berthed at the city's Maritime Center.

Leading the boats across the line was Dr. Kevin Hogan's Charleston-based *Kintaro*, a C&C 44. But the showstopper was Steve Lesniak's Beneteau 510 *Celadon*, which started only 50 yards off the piers at the Maritime Center where crowds of onlookers cheered as her purple spinnaker pulled the boat along. One of *Celadon*'s crew, Hamilton Foster, said later via phone that "We wanted to be in a position to put our spinnaker up early and not have to jibe before we got to the first turning mark. I guess we accomplished that."

The third boat across the line was also local—Bill Hanckle's J/120 *EmOcean*—with his son Will at the helm. She quickly moved to the head of the fleet with judicious trimming of her enormous white spinnaker. Ten minutes later, as *EmOcean* and the other the lead boats rounded the first mark near the confluence of the Cooper and Ashley Rivers, and headed for the main shipping channel, the breeze intensified and began to rotate to the northeast. This was where Joe Harris's Open 50 *Gryphon Solo* started to make her move. With her bright red hull gleaming, this 'round-the-world racer was clocked at nearly 12 knots as she powered past the entire field.

The chairman of the South Carolina Maritime Foundation (the organization that produces this race)—Hank Hofford—stood at the helm of *Gryphon Solo* as she gradually extended her lead. By the time the top four boats began to sail out through the Charleston Harbor jetties and into the open ocean, Hofford and company were several hundred yards ahead of their nearest pursuers—*EmOcean*, followed closely by Mark Weber's Swan 56 *Nova* from Sag Harbor, N.Y., and just about 200 yards astern, Charlestonian Buddy Darby's Swan 70 *Luna Danns*, coming on strong.

Hofford and the three other sailors on board *Gryphon Solo* (which includes his wife Susan Ford) will need all the speed they can muster over the 777-mile course to Bermuda if they're to finish ahead of their rivals on corrected time. Based on her rating, the boat

will owe *EmOcean* over 27 hours. And Gryphon Solo owes the slowest rated boat in the fleet—Richard Muenow’s Brewer 44 *Ageless Adventure*—286 seconds per mile, or almost 62 hours.

As the remainder of the fleet sailed one-by-one out of the jetties and into the open ocean, each was met by a moderate three-to-four-foot chop coming out of the east. The winds, which were averaging around 12 to 14 knots, continued to swing around toward the east as well, meaning that for the third time in six years, the competitors in this event would have to endure winds on the nose as they set off for Bermuda. According to Hamilton Foster aboard *Celadon*, “We’re hoping for a shift so that we won’t have to sail straight into the wind the whole way.”

The fleet leaders should be nearing the Gulf Stream later tonight. The sea conditions in that vicinity shouldn’t be too bad by then. As of 2:50 p.m. today, the data buoy that’s anchored 41 n.m. southeast of Charleston was registering winds of 16 knots and seas at nearly six feet.

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 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 <http://www.scmaritime.org/>.

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