

## Fleet Perseveres as Three Boats Drop Out on Sunday

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA (May 21, 2007)—As Monday dawned out on the Atlantic Ocean, the majority of the fleet in the Charleston to Bermuda Race continued to make slow but steady progress toward the finish line off St. David's Light on Bermuda. Maintaining the lead he's held since 25 minutes after the start on Friday, Hugh Piggin and his crew on board Joe Harris's 10-year-old Open 50 *Gryphon Solo* were 239 miles from the finish as of the 10:00 a.m. position update moving at only 4.8 knots. Piggin's nearest rival, Buddy Darby and his crew on board the Sweden 70 *Luna Dannels*, trailed the smaller boat by some 56 miles.

At the time of that update, the four-person crew on *Gryphon Solo* was dealing with light winds from the north and her iBoatTrack transponder registered only 3.3 knots of wind. Meanwhile, *Luna Dannels'* crew had sailed into better conditions sailing at better than 7 knots. Not far astern of *Luna Dannels* and slightly north, Will Hanckel and his crew aboard the Charleston-based J/120 *EmOcean* were enjoying stronger westerly winds while making 7.9 knots toward the finish.

Sunday—the third day of the race—turned out to be a day of attrition due to light and inconsistent winds. After wallowing in very little wind for most of the previous night, Teddy Turner, Jr., and his crew on board the 46-foot catamaran *Reason*, decided to “throw in the towel.” Explaining his decision via phone on Sunday afternoon, Turner said: “I've got family commitments, and I have to be in Bermuda by Wednesday. The weather forecast indicated that we won't have much wind for about 30 hours, so we unanimously opted to take the fastest way there.” Turner said he turned on the boat's twin engines at 6:30 a.m. Sunday. At the time of the call, he felt his crew would arrive in Bermuda by Tuesday night or early Wednesday.

Much further south, Richard Meunow and his crew aboard the Brewer 44 *Ageless Adventure* made the decision to turn back for Charleston late in the day yesterday. Meunow radioed ashore that he and his crew hadn't made much progress toward Bermuda and were worried they didn't have sufficient fuel to get there under power should the wind falter entirely. As of the 10:00 a.m. position update today, *Ageless Adventure* was headed for home at 5.6 knots, still some 89 miles from Charleston.

The third withdrawal in the race was announced via phone at just after 9:00 p.m. last night when Mark Weber called to say his that he and his three person crew aboard the Swan 56 *Nova* had decided to head for shore, probably to Morehead City, N.C. “We've enjoyed the first half of this race tremendously,” explained Weber, “but we just didn't see any weather coming our way in the forecast and several of us have commitments on shore that we're obligated to meet.” Weber said that the wind had died at 6:00 p.m. that night, and they opted to turn the engine on at 8:30 p.m. No daily position update was available for *Nova* today.

Meanwhile, the rest of the fleet endures. As Hanckel's *EmOcean* maintains a strong lead among the entries in Spinnaker Class A, three competitors in that class are experiencing tight action. As of the 10:00 a.m. update, Beezer Molton's J/120 *Don Quixote* held a slim, 12-mile margin over Dr. Kevin Hogan's C&C 44 *Kintaro*. And less than 5 miles astern of Hogan, David Guggenheim's Beneteau 40.7 *Piakea* was in the hunt. (Fittingly, the crew aboard *Piakea* related that they had seen a pod of pilot whales during the day on Sunday.) But the pressure is on for Molten's Charleston-based crew because his boat is the faster rated vessel and thus owes each of the others time. He needs to beat *Kintaro* by 4.5 hours and *Piakea* by almost 4 hours to preserve his spot ahead of them.

Except for *Gryphon Solo*, which is reaching in northerly winds, the rest of the fleet is sailing downwind in moderate westerly breezes. It's evident *EmOcean*, *Don Quixote* and *Kintaro*, and perhaps others, have been making some jibes to preserve the best sailing angle in the prevailing winds. This situation is expected to continue throughout the day, and if it does, *Luna Danns*, *Emocean*, and many of the others in the fleet will close the gap between themselves and *Gryphon Solo*. As of this morning, the iBoatTrack performance data calculated that Piggini and his team would reach Bermuda by Tuesday shortly before 4:00 p.m., but Mother Nature could have much to say about that.

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.

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