

Enjoying a fine Pacific sunrise after a long watch on *Turicum*. From left: Terry Reid, John North and Don McFarlane.





VIC- MAUI 2012

CELESTIAL VIEWS, CLOSE CALLS AND CHAMPAGNE SAILING MADE THIS YEAR'S VIC-MAUI ONE OF THE BEST IN RECENT MEMORY

By Christof Marti

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF riding a bike from Vancouver to New York? That sounds crazy, but it will give you a good idea what sailing from Victoria to Lahaina, Maui, means—2,308 miles across the Pacific Ocean, at the speed of a bicycle covering about the same distance.

The course for the Vic-Maui is roughly broken into three sections. The first section includes the start, the trip up the Juan de Fuca Strait and the left turn into the open Pacific. The second section includes the trip down the coast of Washington, Oregon and sometimes northern California, and the right hand turn around the southern border of the Pacific high pressure zone, which sits on the rhumb line between Victoria and Maui. The last section is the homestretch to Hawaii and the one that the racers look forward to the most. It takes place in the sunshine, squalls and rollers of the trade winds, and ends in the Pailolo Channel between Molokai and Maui.

Preparations for the 23rd edition of the Vic-Maui International Yacht Race for most boats started more than 12 months before the race. Preparing the boat, getting a team together, crew training and qualifying races take a lot of time. But finally the day arrived: the three boats in the cruising division started on July 5, with the 10 boats in the racing division crossing the start line two days later.

I was crew aboard *Turicum*, a C&C 44 based out of the Vancouver Rowing Club. *Turicum* has done six of the seven most recent Vic-Maui Yacht Races, winning her division in the 2008 edition. ▶

INTO THE OPEN PACIFIC The J-145 *Double Take* had the best start of the racing division and was leading the fleet from the beginning, quickly catching the two lead boats in the cruising division, *Ballymack*, a Hans Christian 48 and *Radiance*, a Beneteau First 456. Early in the first evening most of the fleet in the racing division sailed by Duntze Rock, leaving the Juan de Fuca Strait and entering the open Pacific Ocean. For the first time we saw the sun set over the Pacific, the North American continent fading away in the East.

On day two the fleet was still close together. A steady breeze of 20-plus knots blew from the northeast. Perfect conditions to set a spinnaker and get the most out of the boat. Every now and then a wave hit our stern at just the right angle, allowing us to surf the wave for a brief moment. We managed to sail more than 200 miles that day.

During the following days we saw our first albatross, effortlessly gliding alongside us, its wingtips almost touching the crest of the waves as it swooped by our transom. A school of dolphins greeted us and swam alongside our boat for a while before taking off again. We even sighted a shark swimming near by.

For a few days *Turicum* sailed within sight of *Family Affair*, a Beneteau First 45, and then alongside the Olson 40, *Red Heather*, for another day. That was the last we saw of our fellow sailors until we arrived in Maui. But thanks to modern communication systems and the required daily roll-call, each boat was able to keep track of their competitors during the race so we could evaluate how well we were faring compared to the other teams.

SETTLING IN It would take most sailors a few days to settle into the routine of living aboard. Life becomes very simple when all you have to worry about is sailing, sleeping and eating. The food aboard was fantastic. Homemade shepherd's pie, salmon on a dill sauce, beef stroganoff and a large goody bag full of delicious chocolate bars for the graveyard watch were just a few of the culinary highlights.

The sky was often overcast during the first half of the race. These nights were pitch black and only the glow of the instruments penetrated the darkness. The occasional bioluminescence sparkled in our wake. This was quite magical.

While it was always tough to get up in the middle of the night, there is nothing more

Family Affair and Turicum at the start in Victoria.



Red Heather



Ballymack

ABOVE: PATTI LINK; LEFT: ARTHUR FROE

mesmerizing than sailing in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and watching the day break. First, the sky in the east turned from black to dark blue, the stars slowly faded away, leaving only Venus and Jupiter up above. The sky started to glow red and yellow until the sun appeared over the horizon. Time for a cup of hot chocolate before the next watch came on deck.

But it wasn't all serenity and sunsets. One morning, while waiting to get off watch, a big bang made us look up to see the foresail disappearing into the water alongside the hull. The halyard had broken. We went to retrieve the sail on the foredeck, attach it to the second halyard and send it up again. *Turicum* barely lost a beat. Still, we had to climb the mast to re-run the broken halyard. Neptune was kind however, and greeted us with a sunny day and only

about 10 to 15 knots of breeze. Getting up the mast, feeding the halyard from the top and hoisting the sail again was done in less than 15 minutes.

A CLOSE RACE It became quite clear early on that this will be a close race. While we did not see any boats, there were quite a few racers within 50 miles of our position. *Double Take* and the Riptide 35, *Terremoto*, lead the fleet. Close to the lead boats was *Kinetic*, a Beneteau First 47.7, followed by us on *Turicum*, *Red Heather* and the Beneteau First 40.7, *Bravo Zulu*. Our team worked hard trying to close the gap with *Kinetic*, as we were second in class.

The trade winds were not as strong and further south than usual. This made for more downwind sailing and less reaching. Sailing in the trade winds also comes with



Terremotto



Kinetic

ABOVE & TOP: ARTHUR FROE

a weather phenomenon relatively new to us B.C. boaters—squalls. Black clouds and rain repeatedly approached us and each time they came we tried to keep them on our port stern so we could get a nice boost from wind speeds of 20 to 25 knots. A light sprinkling of rain was also welcome to help cool us off after baking in the mid-Pacific sun.

A LITTLE ONBOARD EXCITEMENT The most dramatic moment for our team was when we lost hydraulic pressure for the backstay adjuster. This resulted in the forestay not being tensioned enough and thus swinging violently back and forth each time the boat rolled in a wave. As luck would have it, this was also one of the days where we had the strongest breeze, with the wind blowing steadily at 25 knots

and increased to over 30 knots in squalls. Our boatspeed hit 18 knots during one wild surf down a roller.

Just before nightfall one of our crew climbed over the transom, secured by three different tethers and two harnesses and mounted a jury rig. Meanwhile, we kept on thundering down the waves, relentlessly pushing *Turicum* and hoping to make up a few miles on *Kinetic*.

It was absolutely amazing teamwork. Some were sailing the boat, others were assisting with the rigging work. We were still averaging between nine and 10 knots and pushing 14 and 15 knots in squalls during the repair.

THE GHOST SHIP During one of the roll calls, the Vic-Maui fleet was alerted of a ghost ship in our path to Maui. Its skipper ▶



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was airlifted off for medical reasons, but set the wind vane of his boat on course to Maui. We later learned that the boat belongs to a Canadian sailor who raced single-handed during the Pacific Cup. The sailor was reported to have recovered and the boat salvaged by friends.

CHAMPAGNE SAILING The sunsets on the open ocean can be quite spectacular. As the sun slowly went down, it painted the sky in warm yellow and orange colours. Cumulus clouds appeared like black castles on the horizon and rain from a distant squall draped like a curtain around us. As night fell, we sailed in moderate winds under a sky speckled with millions of stars. This was champagne sailing.

The temperature climbed steadily during the whole race, eventually allowing us to wear t-shirts and shorts day and night. As the ocean temperature rose to well above 20 degrees, flying fish appeared. They jumped out of the water then gliding effortlessly just inches above the waves before diving under the surface again. One poor guy landed on our deck. Unfortunately for us, (fortunately for him) he was too small to eat and was dispatched back to his natural element.

THE FINAL STRETCH We were still a few hundred miles from Maui when the first three boats in Class A finished. *Double Take* and *Terremoto* crossed the finish line after 10 and 11 days respectively, followed by the *Santa Cruz 50, Incantation*, on day 12. *Kinetic* was the first boat home in Class B, finishing hours before *Incantation*. *Red Heather* made it into port the following day.

On corrected time we were still in second place ahead of *Red Heather*, but about 24 hours from the finish line we lost the wind. For almost 12 hours *Turicum* made almost no way. This was very painful after having sailed a good race so far. The wind picked up after sunset. The night was clear, full of twinkling stars with Venus and Jupiter illuminating our wake. About a hundred miles before landfall a glow appeared on the horizon to mark Maui's location.

LAND HO! The next morning the cloud clad Volcano Haleakala on Maui came into sight. With the asymmetrical spinnaker up, we were making good way toward Maui so there were big smiles all around. We could almost taste the Mai-Tais waiting at the welcome dock in Lahaina.



The crew of *DoubleTake* celebrate their line honours and overall victory.



Bravo Zulu



Turicum

ARTHUR FROE X3

The last hours were trying again when the wind completely disappeared three miles from the finish line. The water looked glassy like a mirror. Dozens of dolphins jumped and dived around our boat, as if trying to cheer us up. With every puff of wind we inched closer to the finish.

Finally, a last little breeze and we were across the finish line. In just over 14 days we concluded the Vic-Maui race and placed second in Class B. Everybody cheered—the emotions were high.

Shortly after finishing, our skipper Gunnar Jonsson docked *Turicum* at Lahaina Harbor where, like it was for all of the boats in the race, a big crowd of family, friends, supporters, other sailors and locals welcomed us. What a moment, seeing so many people greeting the team.

Hugs and kisses for our loved ones—hand shakes from our competitors. Tears of joy, laughter and big smiles. It was overwhelming. Mai Tais for everybody followed by a champagne bath, and the dock party was in full swing.

Within a few hours of our docking, *Bravo Zulu* finished, followed by *Family Affair*, *Anne Bonny* and *Red Sheilla*. The cruising boats finished a few days later with *Radiance* leading the way, *Ballymack* in second and *Big Ben* in third after 20 days, and everyone arriving with big smiles.

FULFILLING THE DREAM Like many sailors in B.C. and the Pacific Northwest, I had dreamed about doing the Vic-Maui race ever since hearing about it. Sitting on the dock in Lahaina, Mai-Tai in hand, among my fellow crewmates, having sailed the 2,308 miles from Victoria to Maui across the Pacific Ocean—this journey was something special that I'll never forget. 🍹

WORST CASE SCENARIO
 Medical Evac in the Middle of the Pacific
 By Jack Dale

This past July, while delivering *Turicum* home from the Vic-Maui International Yacht Race, we had to evacuate a crewmember that was having medical problems to a 335-metre container ship, 1,000 miles north of Hawaii. The experience is one I will never forget, from which I learned a lot.

Crewmate Andy Dawes had a pre-existing medical condition, and before he signed up for the delivery he got the OK from his doctors, who provided him with a set of medical supplies, just in case.

After departing Lahaina, there was the usual period of adjusting to the motion of the boat and the majority of crew did suffer from a little seasickness, with some having issues rehydrating. This led to some further complications for Andy, who had to ask that we stabilize the boat by heaving to, so he could deal with his issues.

On day seven, Andy approached me and indicated that his condition was not improving and that he did not think that completing the rest of the trip was feasible. I said I would seek assistance. After I tried a call on both the SSB and VHF, I used the satellite phone to call the Coast Guard in Honolulu. After Andy conferred with the Coast Guard Flight Surgeon about his condition it was determined that medical evacuation would be necessary and that

they would seek assistance from another vessel. We then started a six-hour call back routine.

The Coast Guard on Honolulu contacted the *Navarino*, a 335-metre container ship headed for Los Angeles, which was available in 20 hours for a daylight meeting. We arranged to meet at 39° 10' N 150° W.

We arrived at the rendezvous site a little early and watched the horizon and the AIS for signs of the *Navarino*. The AIS was invaluable as we were able to see the container ship when it was about 25 miles away and noticed that it was not headed straight for the rendezvous point. After a failed attempt to reach the *Navarino* on the VHF, we called the Coast Guard in Honolulu who directed the *Navarino* to us. The Coast Guard initially told us that a rescue boat would be used for the transfer, but we were then told that we would be pulling alongside to a pilot-boarding point 1.5 metres above the waterline. The *Navarino* was travelling light, so the boarding

point was actually 4.5 metres high.

After establishing radio contact with the *Navarino* we were informed by the captain that they would put the vessel in a position where we would be in the lee. They would be maintaining steerage way at a speed of three knots. We lowered our sails and set up our fenders for a starboard approach. They set out two "balloons" to act as fenders.

I had seen what can happen when these situations go wrong and was especially concerned about the suction that would bring *Turicum* in close to *Navarino*. This was an unnerving situation.

As we brought *Turicum* alongside, the crew of *Navarino* dropped a Jacob's ladder and a safety harness. Dave Maskell helped Andy into the harness. We fought to keep *Turicum* stable, and eventually Andy was able to get onto the ladder and climb up. The crew of the *Navarino* dropped another line that we used to send up a bag with some of Andy's belongings.

The rendezvous was by and large

successful. In the process of keeping *Turicum* alongside, the starboard sidelight was destroyed, the rub rail was scratched and two fenders were deflated. After Andy was taken aboard he was given a hot bath to help alleviate some of his symptoms and then provided a roast chicken and potato lunch. He then got some much-needed rest.

On arrival in Los Angeles, an ambulance met the ship and Andy was taken to a hospital for examination. He was released and flew home the following day.

While medical evacuation at sea is not a common experience, it does happen. Like all emergencies it needs forethought to go smoothly.

We would like to thank the Coast Guard in Honolulu for all their help and Captain Athanasios Pagkalos and the crew of the *Navarino* for coming to our assistance. It is reassuring to know that a system like the Automated Mutual Assistance Vessel Rescue System (AMVER) exists and that fellow mariners are willing and able to come to our assistance.