

# Victoria to Maui yacht race a high-pressure affair

## Tricky navigation for 15 competitors

BY CHRISTOF MARTI, SPECIAL TO THE SUN AUGUST 7, 2014



The crew of String Theory prepares for a return to B.C.

**Photograph by:** Christof Marti, Special to Vancouver Sun

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Fifteen boats competed in the biannual Vic-Maui International Yacht race starting in early July, and the 2014 event saw it all.

From light winds to storms, from idle fishing in the doldrums to tricky navigation around the high pressure zones; it was all there. Great memories were made yet again and we all look forward to the 50th anniversary race in 2016.

The race started in Victoria and took the competitors across the Pacific to Lahaina, Maui; more than 4,000 kilometres away. Most boats took around 14 days to complete one of the world's longest ocean races.

This year's competition was very challenging, as the Pacific high that has traditionally developed by this time of the year was split into several high pressure zones.

While high pressure brings us sunny weather in Vancouver, sailors dread it as there is no wind in the centre of a high. The fleet soon split into two groups, one seeking a more westerly path between two distinct high pressure zones, the other staying closer east hoping for stronger winds closer to shore.

Both groups had to endure days of light winds making little progress to Maui, sails flapping idly under the scorching sun. The sailors worked to make some headway towards the elusive trade winds, the day only broken by the lonely flying fish and the odd tuna slicing through the water.

Rumour has it that some competitors passed the time fishing or going for a swim. After days of crawling across the Pacific, the fleet finally reached the trade winds. Competitors who decided on the more westerly route came out on top and enjoyed sailing in a solid breeze, while the other boats farther east had to wait a little longer to enjoy the fresh breeze.

This year's Vic-Maui race saw its share of excitement. Early on, Anduril lost steering and had to hobble into San Francisco under emergency steering. Kinetic lost two steering cables but had a third in store that got them to Maui. Strong winds and sudden squalls shredded thousands of dollars worth of sails on different boats.

A final storm near the finish line tore through the fleet with brute force, bringing down the mast of Kahuna and ripping up the main sail on Turicum. Luckily, nobody was hurt and all boats made it safely into port. The sail lofts back in Vancouver are looking forward to the fleet's return.

Long Board crossed the finish line at Kaanapali first and took the overall win. String Theory won their division and took second overall.

Volunteer and sponsors from Lahaina organized a welcome party for each boat and sailors' families and friends. Mai Tais and champagne flowed freely no matter the time of day or night as the sailors crossed the finish line.

For more information on the race, visit [vicmaui.org](http://vicmaui.org)

The Vic-Maui race would not be complete without a few days of R-and-R on Maui. The island has every thing one can dream of: Turquoise water and sandy beaches for swimming and surfing, mountains to climb, seaside restaurants serving delicious fare, sublime snorkelling, sailing, paragliding, fishing and there is even a submarine.

One of my favourite beaches is Baby Beach, just outside of Lahaina. A reef breaks the waves, making it perfect for families with small children. If you want to give surfing a go, head to the beach just north of Lahaina for the perfect wave. The adventurous can rent a car and drive the road to Hana.

To escape the heat, you can get to the north end of Maui or even drive up Haleakala, one of the worlds' largest dormant volcanoes.

For accommodation, I personally favour the hotels or small condo complexes in Lahaina over the large resorts of Kaanapali. You can walk everywhere in Lahaina: Down to Front Street for a dinner overlooking the ocean, having a swim or going surfing on the beach or picking up some fresh fruit from the local market.

As I am writing these lines I am sailing aboard String Theory about 500 miles north of Maui, returning the boat back to Vancouver together with her owners and a group of students.

Stay tuned for more stories from the high seas, fishing for Mahi Mahi and gorgeous sunset on the

Pacific Ocean. In the meantime you can follow our progress [here](#).

Aloha!

*Christof Marti is the owner of Simply Sailing School in Vancouver ([simplysailing.ca](http://simplysailing.ca)) and is a both director on the Board of BC Sailing and the Vancouver Rowing Club. Trained as an engineer and with an MBA in finance, Christof is also a qualified sailing instructor and a certified Yachtmaster. He will be filing reports from B.C.'s coastal waters over the season.*

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