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Ivor Wilkins Photo

The traditional Patio Bay raft-up prior to festivities ashore

Patio Bay plays host to great fleet of yachts and launches

After the horrendous weather of Friday, Saturday's relative calm was a pleasant surprise for a lot of people. The idea of a Mark Foy race is for the slowest boats to leave with a handy margin and the faster boats to try and catch them before the finish. However, with little or no wind, this all backfired, with the slower boats barely clearing Bean Rock before the faster boats started to drift out with the tide after them.

A fickle easterly arrived, proving a most difficult wind to predict and splitting the fleet. We tacked our way around Brown's Island only to be again greeted by a glassy smooth surface. *Rainbow* sailed off into a hole which swallowed her up indefinitely. She later withdrew. The rest of the fleet split into two camps, some breaking away towards Waiheke, while the majority stayed closer to the Maraetai side.

What ensued was a battle of wits trying to pick the next dark cloud that might bring some wind or deciding on an appropriate time to tack away before coming to a stop in the next lull. *Achenar* managed to steal away on a puff with the cruising *Etchell Sirocco* tagging along behind her. Next to get a break on the fleet was Doug Reid in the K class *Sapphire* with *Thelma* close behind. *Little Jim* and *Rainbird* sailed

up the opposite side of the course, but managed to keep in touch. What greeted us as we rounded the bottom end of Waiheke was no surprise. The slightest of breezes and an incoming tide made for slow progress along the last couple of miles. *Achenar* eventually stormed in to take the gun and the Modern Classic win, *Sapphire* took the A division win.

Cont. overleaf

Patio Bay continued ...

As *Rainbird* finished she looked like she might be the last finisher for the day as a complete calm crept over the bay. A number of vessels started motor into the bay, but *Helen* and *Profile*'s skippers are made of sterner stuff. Just before 6pm they appeared very slowly chasing whatever slight lines of breeze they could towards the finish line. A huge cheer went up in the bay when *Helen* finally crossed the line with *Profile* close behind.

It was a day for the launches!

Steve Cranch

*Kailua rockets
across the finish
line at the head of
the fleet*

Launches Revel in Rudder Cup Calm

Did the Rudder Cup Commemorative Race (RCCR) to Patio Bay signal a return to the launch racing heyday of the early part of the twentieth century?

Probably not, but what a sight! Fifteen classic launches, immaculately presented,

lined up at Orakei at 12.00 on Saturday 5th December, engines throbbing, awaiting their turn for the Mark Foy



*Thelma ghosts into
the passage leading
to the finish line*

Ivor Wilkins Photo



Ivor Wilkins Photo

start of the second RCCR, following the CYA's yacht fleet to Patio Bay at the bottom end of Waiheke.

This year the CYA moved the traditional date of the Rudder Cup from December 12th to align it with the annual yacht race to Patio Bay and Xmas party. Unfavourable weather for the yachts was in fact a bonus for the launches (hence the saying 'its an ill wind.....') for

which a smooth ride was all but guaranteed.

First away at midday was Alan Houghton's *Raindance* at a steady 7 knots, a speed the envy of the becalmed yacht fleet. Over the next hour the remaining 14 vessels progressively started with Chris Miller's ex Tory Channel whalechaser *Rorqual* having the dubious honour of starting last. That's the penalty for having a large

Detroit under the floor and a top speed reputedly in the low 20 knot range.

The trip down the inside of Waiheke was relatively uneventful, but the fleet started to close up just short of Passage Rock, the last turning mark. Speeds started to increase as the early starters glanced anxiously astern at the rapidly closing bow waves of half a dozen of the faster boats. Similarly



Some of the 15 launches that took part in the Rudder Cup Centennial race. photos by Chris Miller, Alan Houghton and Ivor Wilkins

the faster boats sensed the possibility of overhauling the slower craft with the finish line in sight and opened throttles to hasten the inevitable.

Boating New Zealand's photographer, Mike Hunter, himself now the proud new owner of the beautiful straight-stemmer *Florence* from Opuia, lay in wait with camera at the ready, reeling off megabytes of images to be

drooled over in future days. A significant chop created by the now bunched entrants made steering interesting for some of the smaller craft and hatches were closed as sheets of spray streamed off the bows of these sedate old ladies of the past. The odd skipper opted instead for outside steering as the only way to keep a vigilant lookout.

The accuracy of the

handicapping was now put to the test as in theory 15 boats should charge across the finish line together. Well, almost!

First across the line was one of the later starters, Graham Guthrie's lovely Salthouse sedan *Kailua*, hotly followed by one of the smallest boats in the fleet, Mark Stapleton's *Silver Spray*. Third place went to one of the fastest boats,

the fastidiously prepared *Falcon* owned by James Mobberley. No doubt this last performance was aided by the fresh antifoul and a relaunching approximately two hours before the start. Now that's serious racing!

Dick Coughlan's *Ferro* made a somewhat more cautious approach to the finish, taking care to conserve the last few drops of diesel. Dick obviously got the diesel v. rum equation a little unbalanced and had to seek the favour of a former *Ferro* partner to acquire sufficient fuel for the trip home on Sunday.

In contrast to *Ferro*, *Romance II*, with new and enthusiastic owner Harold Kidd at the helm, made a fabulous sight thundering down the track from Passage Rock. Her bow was in the air and the skipper proudly stood in the hatch piloting his beautiful vessel at 19 knots to the finish. This display merely confirmed to the handicapper there will be no favourable adjustments to future handicaps.

With the fleet at anchor, it was time to relax over a drink and watch a sight from yesteryear as first *Thelma* and later *Waitangi* appeared and edged their way to the finish in a dying breeze. Although preceded by a few of the modern classic yachts, there's nothing to beat the sight of the large gaff riggers under full sail.

Pre-dinner drinks completed, everyone retired ashore to once again enjoy the hospitality of Bert and Margaret Woolcott and their family, this being a very special year for them, a

Continued overleaf ...

Rudder Cup ...

celebration of their ownership of the property in the family for 100 years. A barbecue, speeches, a prizegiving and finally a fireworks display capped off a truly magical weekend for all, with the weather continuing to play its part for the ride home on

Sunday, for the launches at least.

The launch handicapping is becoming more refined with each event so it is to be expected the results will get closer in future. In fact, for this race, over half the fleet finished within six minutes of one another. The handicapping is done rather

like PHRF, with power to weight ratio equating to sail area and displacement. The rest is largely down to historical performance. Unlike a yacht however, where it is presumed a skipper will sail as fast as he/she can, the same doesn't necessarily apply to the launch where the skipper may elect for many

completely logical reasons, to hold a little in reserve for the sake of minimising future engine repair bills.

The next race will be at the Mahurangi regatta and this is likely to be another Mark Foy start but over a relatively short course, so we should see a great spectacle at the finish.

Colin Pawson

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Friday 12 February	Race One
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***Notice of Race and Entry Forms online:
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Contact: Joyce Talbot
Tel: 836 4015
Fax: (09) 836 4747
Email: admin@classicyacht.org.nz

CLASSIC YACHT ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

GENERAL ENQUIRIES:

CLUB CAPTAIN YACHTS:

CLUB CAPTAIN LAUNCHES:

EDITOR:

WEBSITE:

Joyce Talbot (09) 836 4747 or admin@classicyacht.org.nz

Jason Prew (09) 846 4721

Chris Miller 021 961 936

Harold Kidd harold@ktmlaw.co.nz

www.classicyacht.org.nz