

## Harbour Race 2 21<sup>st</sup> October 2017

Another day of sailing history for the Huon Yacht Club was written last Saturday for the second harbour series race for the year, with approximately two hours of sailing around the bay at Port Huon on a two lap course. There was a good breeze again, varying between 10 to 15 knots and gusting up to 30 knots particularly later in the race.

This time the boats had a staggered start with the slower boats first to leave followed by the faster yachts approximately 30 minutes later with the first across the finish line taking honours as winner on handicap. Stardust Dancer was the first away establishing a very handy half a lap lead before the other boats started. French Connection and Yoop started close together as The Yoop missed her start time by 5 minutes and was still tied up to the Yacht Club jetty with the crew working on her when it was time for her to leave.

French Connection pulled out all stops and set her spinnaker soon after the start. From that point it



was “race on” as Stardust Dancer tried hard to maintain her lead. The westerly winds strengthened once the yachts moved out behind the shadow of Regatta Point and put them on a steady reach across to the first marker.

Jeff Sharp, with many years of experience sailing these waters and his crew on French Connection, used every opportunity to deploy their spinnaker

and, with his knowledge of where to find the strongest and cleanest breezes and where to best take advantage of the outgoing tide, they made steady gains from the start, first overtaking The Yoop and then putting Stardust squarely in her sights.

Stardust held her lead for the first lap then made it back out to Brabazon Point still ahead and was heading back to Hospital Bay when she noticed that The Yoop had taken the lead from French Connection as they headed out toward the first marker on the second lap. Something had happened to French Connection that remained a mystery until



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after the race when the truth was revealed.

Jeff Sharp is a sailor who rounds marks with a minimum of clearance but the changeable and unpredictable strengthening breeze coming out of the bay caught Jeff and the crew out as French Connection managed to catch the buoy on her starboard rudder.

Jeff sailed around in circles for a quite a few seconds with the buoy dragging behind, trying to dislodge it before it finally released and then he sailed in a circle and back around the buoy to serve the penalty for touching the mark.

He sailed out of the bay hoisting the spinnaker to try and make up for lost time but the changeable winds caused a few dramas as the crew gybed the spinnaker and ended up with a twist in it, again costing them time.

As the wind came on the nose the spinnaker was dropped and the headsail hoisted but in the confusion the headsail had come out of the track on the foil so it had to be dropped again on to the deck and re-hoisted correctly costing them more time.



By this stage The Yoop had caught and passed them and were probably laughing at their antics and once again Jeff and the crew had a chase on their hands to catch the boats ahead.

French Connection slowly made ground on The Yoop managing to pass her just after they rounded the Brabazon Point mark. Stardust Dancer still had a sizable lead but as all three

yachts headed back toward Hospital Bay there was not enough puff for Stardust to take advantage of her ever diminishing lead, and the wind continually swung back and forth in direction and mostly away from where everyone wanted to head. Hope was in sight however as it became apparent that a westerly wind was blowing strongly in Hospital Bay with white caps visible from a distance on the approach. This set the scene for the final great tussle between all three boats.

One of the great things about sailing with a local yacht club is how it improves your skills under many different conditions. Yacht racing magnifies small errors that after the race become the subject of much reflection. "How can I do that better next time?". "Where did we go wrong?". Every race teaches you something new. One or two mistakes made in the heat of battle can often make the difference between a win and a loss.

French Connection regained her lead over The Yoop and finally overtook Stardust at the marker in Hospital Bay, then headed comfortably back to the finish line for her second win in the series. Stardust managed to hold her lead over The Yoop with all boats finishing within four minutes.

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It was a good day and new members are always welcome to join in the good fun out on the water.

Next Saturday is the first of the long distance races commencing at 11 am at Port Huon, with the course taking the yachts to Cygnet and then returning via Brooks Bay. Hopefully the weather gods will smile on us with a sunny day and predictable winds.