

Sailing Report, B.O.D. AGM, 26th November 2006

After making a casual remark in the summer I find myself billed to give a sailing report to the B.O.D. AGM !

Since I first owned a B.O.D. in 1990 and certainly since first sailing one in 1962 massive changes have taken place in sailing. More people are involved - and everyone still agrees that One Design racing is the best sport. But there are now so very many classes available that worthwhile club fleets are actually rarer than ever. Some highly promoted production class boats come and go within two years.

At Brightlingsea handicap racing predominates and only the Fireball, designed 40 years ago, remains established. Knowing the local sailing fraternity as I do, and gauging an existing limbo, I have to say that if we want to re-establish the B.O.D. class then right now really is as good a time as ever.

Classic, our boats certainly are, - full on glossy magazine classic, but the available stock of sailable boats is now a problem and considerable commitment is needed to restore the others. Nice to be able to report then that good boats, "sidelined" in recent years, have changed hands into more active use. Abandoned boats in fields have always been an arrow in my heart, so again, nice to be able to report that Nick Readings is making a collection (I know where there are several more, Nick). And of course - thanks to the massive foresight and effort of John Mullins (Brightlingsea trained you know!) the fibreglass boats are imminent.

Pyefleet Week and the racing have been better this year and the actual racing is what will anchor it all. It seemed to me that, in the current momentum created by a good deal of hard work by Mike Hempstead and others, that this deserves an overhaul in areas normally beyond our remit. In that connection I have been busy on two fronts.

Taking the second one first, THE RACING COURSES: I hope that you have seen a copy and that my reasoning and changes from the BSC courses make some sense. Only to add that with very minor alterations these courses can be used off any of the local start lines, which gives us additional flexibility. - Are you happy with them? Please make any comments. Questions?

FLEET STARTS If at this critical stage we accept the importance of other sailors perception of our growth as well as our own enjoyment of the sailing as it happens, then focussing on good fleet racing is vital. But in the context of regattas, Pyefleet Week, club duties and busy lives, the question arises exactly how many races? When? and Where?

Selfishly picking a number that would suit me, I rang round and six Sunday races seemed to suit. Please comment - I take the view that only if almost everybody wants more then we should have more. Obviously club handicap races are open to all, my objective here is the right number of class starts to achieve the best turnout possible in each.

Turning to when and where - both clubs with which we have close and long established connections can be potentially very helpful to us - and us to them. The dilemma is that both are inevitably and unavoidably pre-occupied.

P.T.O.

The logistics of running our own racing, either relying on Nick who does so much else, or with rota'd rescue boat crews and starting officers from a critically small fleet are obviously feasible, but not perfect, and "doing a deal" with another fleet is possible too.

It was while thinking on this that BSC Vice Commodore, "OZ" Aldridge, responding favourably to one or two "points made", and recognising the staying power and revival of the fleet, offered class starts and our own courses at BSC.

As you know I am 100% behind the CYC, 100% behind the BSC, and one thousand percent behind the B.O.D.s. The Sailing Club rightly expect some initiative from their fleets to keep race entries up. But for the B.O.D.s joining in the Sailing Club Programme carries massive benefits of scale. They are racing every weekend and apart from "events" we can choose our (six) races from their programme and we shall probably enjoy the benefit of being last start. While two rescue boats are mandatory, our duties would be restricted to O.O.D.s but not on our own class racing days.

I am suggesting six O.O.D. duties "in exchange" for six races. The usual suspects/BSC or CYC members among us will need to do these, and I am suggesting that anyone intending to compete in significantly more BSC handicap races might like to do more. (B.O.D. people were listed for twelve last year.)

If we want more class starts I would suggest we approach CYC to use Batemens Tower line which offers some of the best racing in the estuary - wonderful in south or SSE summer winds. With a "duty free" core of racing days at the BSC we might even cadge help for just one or two extra races from the Tower so that all the boats can sail.

Please comment, none of this is set in stone but dates will very soon need to be.

I am pleased to say that between myself and Mike and Alan (Hicks) Mike and I seem to be co-ordinating the programme and Alan (sometime fleet captain of at least 30 GPs) has agreed to publicise it and make sure you are well advised of dates and times before and during the season. (between us we might possibly even manage a reserve crew list, who knows?)

I feel sure that both the BSC and CYC will recognise the potential benefits to themselves of more B.O.D. sailing - many hands make light work - (especially the kind of nice, clever, attractive, modest, rich, young people who sail B.O.D.s !)

I guess that both clubs have a surfeit of trophies to award for the racing and that they will find ways of scoring and awarding them to make every race fun for everyone right down to the wire.

Please comment

See you on the water.

Malcolm