

Capt. Ron Schaper

One Wednesday Night in America

As my usual ride *E Ticket* is in the yard for repairs, we decided to enter my non-race boat, *Endurance*, for the Wednesday night series. My non-racing wife, Andrea, had deep concerns and reservations about mixing up our “home” on the starting line with a bunch of aggressive racers. I assured her that the winds would be mild and that we’d be very careful and conservative. What she didn’t know was that because we had only one extra crew, Hutch, that soon after the start I would put her on the helm as I trimmed sheets.

Bzzzz...hmmmmm...HISC race com..bzz
hmmmm..windward...bzzzhummmm..reach...star... round...hummmm....any questions? The VHF on the normally clear Hillsboro Inlet Sailing club’s Wednesday night Beer Can Races was hopelessly garbled. After a repeat of the same message, I was able to make out the course through the buzz. The radio crackled with “huh?” from many of the 13 boats jockeying for position. As sailors are often criticized for the arcane nautical terms we use for everything, I relayed the race committee’s course announcement in typical “beercan-ese”; “Dorito, hot dog, starboard roundings.”

HISC (Hillsboro Inlet Sailing Club) Wednesday night Beer Can Races usually finds a dozen boats, ranging from 25 to 45 feet, cruisers, cruiser-racers, and dedicated race boats. Tonight is no different; we have catamarans, trimarans, ultra-light racers and heavy cruisers...all with equal chances to win a race thanks to the magical never-contested always-fair rating system. Good sportsmanship plays a huge role in the pitched battle for bragging rights, free T-shirts and BEER!

After completing the 3 to 4 mile race, we set an anchor on *Endurance* just inside the inlet and most of the competitors rafted up for sandwiches, beer and socializing. As usual, this was a great time for boasting, excuses, sea stories, idle gossip and of course, drinking beer. Finally Jamie, the Beer Can Race Committee Chairman stood under the foredeck light as a vocal chorus of “Race Results!!” echoed across the decks. All competitors were acknowledged and applauded, as results were read from last til 4th place; until... “and in the money!”...as the third, second and first place finishers were announced. First place got a HISC T shirt and a case of beer; second place a ½ case of beer. Whenever the winners don’t join the raft up and instead head right home, their beer is awarded to the next place finisher. There’s always something to be said for just showing up! A fine time was had by all. See you next Wednesday.



Figure 1 Ron on helm, Hutch trimming, moving up on Blue Runner



Figure 2 Andrea on helm, Hutch trimming.



Figure 3 Beer Can Race chairman Jamie giving race results.



Figure 4 After race relaxing on Endurance.



Figure 5 The offshore mark can have lots of Gulf stream current.