



Philippe Delorme's Red Kite II
leaves Tai Tam Bay

FOUR PEAKS *Race*

First, the six boats in IRC Premier (1030), then the 12 boats in IRC A and HKPN A (1035) and finally, eight boats in HKPN B crossed the start line in Tai Tam Bay, Saturday, the 26th of January, of the Beneteau Four Peaks Race 2019. All up: 26 starters, in a breeze of 12 knots and building.

The faster boats made for a windward mark, left it to starboard, came over on to port tack and headed into an easterly blowing through the Beaufort Channel (Shung Sze Mun), past Cape d'Aguilar and northwards to the first peak, Ma On Shan.

The slower boats went the other way. Kites up, they passed the satellite dishes on Bluff Head and sailed on to — *continued overleaf*

Continued from previous page — raising their kites and sailing off past the satellite dishes on Bluff Head and on to the first drop off at Cheung Sha Beach, all arriving near or after 1400.

Tolo, with race founder Stephen Davies driving, got to Lantau first among the 18 faster boats (IRC Premier, IRC A and HKPN A) and sent its runners off to complete the climb in 1 hour and 35 minutes. But not as good as the pair from *Juggerknot* — 1 hour and 17 minutes!

The lead boat on the way over, incidentally, looked like it was going the wrong way around the Sokos (an ambiguity in the sailing instructions perhaps) but, thanks to Davies' superior knowledge, *Tolo* did know where to go and got the jump over *Red Kite II* and a few others . . . until it came time to leave Cheung Sha.

At that point, the wind died for the Varianta 44 and, says owner Jon Cannon, "it was a setback from which we struggled to recover."

In fact, *Tolo* resorted to a tow from its own kayak before eventually finding some breeze quite a long way out. (This after charging up and down the shoreline in strong winds while its runners were ashore.) "Very frustrating for us," said Cannon, "watching *Red Kite II* and *Whiskey Jack* sail away."

After Lantau, the fleets headed east for Lamma Island, and the ascent of Mt Stenhouse. Amazingly, the 73-year-old Davies and wife, Elaine Morgan, shinned up and down this tricky peak in a very respectable time of 2 hours and 4 minutes. Fastest time recorded was 1 hour and 23 minutes by the *Neo One* runners, Myles Winter and Christophe Renoul.

From various pick-up points around Lamma, it was off to Chesterman Buoy in the Lamma Channel and to Hong Kong Island for Violet Hill. A number of sailors don't like this channel marker requirement, saying it's in the path of big ships arriving and departing.

Most of the boats make for Repulse Bay where they drop their runners and, often, collect them in Stanley to gain that extra advantage. Tactics and forward planning are a big part of the Four Peaks Race.

But then conditions began to deteriorate. So much so that a number of boats threw in the towel. *Jarrah* hove to in Tai Tam for an hour in the hope that the wind would ease a little. Some of the crew were not relishing the thought of sailing into a fierce northeasterly all the way to Sai Kung. At about 0400, a decision was made to retire. One of *Jarrah*'s runners, Steve Winbur, had already done three peaks and he was looking forward to the fourth, so it was a disappointment for him.

HKPN B didn't do Ma On Shan. For them, it was back to the Aberdeen Boat Club. For the 10 boats that did make it to Sai Kung, it was tough. Some of them blew sails. But those demanding conditions, and

the calms, are what make the Four Peaks so special.

Red Kite II got its runners ashore just before 0400, followed minutes later by the pair from *Whiskey Jack*. Next to land in their Avon inflatable was the father / son pairing of Jon & Lucas Cannon of *Tolo*. And not a bad time they recorded — up and down in 1 hour, 48 minutes and 2 seconds. Fourth fastest behind *Red Kite II* (1:37:00), *Whiskey Jack* (1:38:05) and the Dutch boat, *Juggerknot* (1:40:42).

"Gone are the days when you're stronger than your kid," said father Jon. "I was like an old machine, rusty and creaky, he (Lucas) was just free wheeling down the mountain. For me it was painful, for him it was 'come on Dad'!"

So, the Beneteau Four Peaks Race 2019 ended with *Blackjack* winner of IRC Premier, followed by *Juggerknot* and *Neo One*. Three out of the six entries in this division retired.

Deserved winner of IRC Division A was *Red Kite II*, followed by *Whiskey Jack* and *Tolo*. *Wicked* took the 4th slot. Four out of the eight boats in this division retired.

The four-boat HKPN Division A was won by *Scintilla* with Graham Young at the helm, followed by *Sea Monkey* with supporter Simpson Marine's David Walder among the crew, and *Ahyoka*. *Harrow Tardis* retired.

In HKPN A, there were eight entries and the winner was *Generations*, followed by veteran participant *No One Else*, and *Jolie Mome* in 3rd. *Tamandu* retired.

This is the 35th running of the challenging Four Peaks Race (the first was held in 1985 — see the ABC website for a complete history). Although the changing of sequence of peaks has affected times, it is worth noting the achievement of the new Young 8, *Gambit*, back in 1994. Its time was a phenomenal 15 hours and 50 minutes. The slowest was by the British Forces entry, *East Wind*, in 1990, at 36 hours and 1 minute.

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Graham Young steers *Scintilla*
past Cape d'Aguilar



around Waglan to Lantau, into waves and wind. Pounding doesn't make it a nice first leg for your runners. It's a shock. Better to get them up Ma On Shan in daylight.

"I don't really care about Premier, or A, or B divisions. You shouldn't make an elite. I would like to see 30 to 40 boats hanging around off Cheung Sha Beach so it might be an idea to have a start an hour or so earlier for the slower boats.

"It's our second Four Peaks in *Juggerknot* so we're still in a learning curve (despite a 2nd in IRC Premier)."

Myles Winter, crew on *Neo One*, ran Lantau and Lamma, and was the quickest on both. "We didn't win on the water and I feel the course was too long. But it must be such a hard race to organise, although the checks were great and so was the safety."

On attempts by some to attract international participation, he remarked:

"You are not going to get the *Scallywags* doing this race. A local fleet is good enough and what we really should be looking at is improving the top end. And perhaps the bottom. The mid-fleet will take care of itself.

In conclusion, Winter said: "With my business, I travel a lot. But I always make sure I'm in Hong Kong for the Four Peaks."

Continued from page 50 — Past race chairman, Barry Hill, points out that the race format and requirements frequently change to improve competitiveness and, of course, safety. The hard core of 14-15 boats make a regular contribution to the event "and help us to tweak and fine-tune the sailing instructions."

Richard van den Berg of *Juggerknot* (formerly of *Kei Lun*) says the race is the ultimate in team work. "It is full of hardship but is a wonderful challenge. You mix runners without sailing experience, and sailors without running experience. They need to work together and are all tested to the extreme in a short period of time. It is extremely rewarding if it goes well.

"I think it is good to make changes to the peaks sequence and sailing instructions. It makes you start again from scratch, and look at strategy. This year's course dragged a bit. It's a long stretch



Sea Monkey. Emmanuel Pitault at the wheel