

# Four Peaks RACE

Shun Shui, 2nd in HKPN B, leaves Tai Tam for Shek Kwu Chau south of Lantau Island



It was an untidy first start to the Beneteau Four Peaks Race 2020 at 1030 on the 11th of January but it didn't take long for IRC Premier, IRC Division A and HKPN A to collect themselves and head out of Tai Tam Bay for Waglan Island on Course 5. The nine faster boats were prepared for a tough 86 nautical miles (rhumbline) on the water with predictions of a cold front coming through that (Saturday) night.

Ten minutes later, the eight entries in HKPN B crossed the line, tacked and set off for their first mark, Shek Kwu Chau south of Lantau Island. Race officer, Arnold Luntz, used the shorter, but no less challenging, Course 7 which is 60.3 nautical miles long and incorporates The Twins on the d'Aguilar Peninsula instead of Ma On Shan.

All 17 boats, in four divisions, had to despatch their runners ashore to assail Lantau Peak, Mt Stenhouse, Violet Hill

and Ma On Shan / The Twins (in that order) and finish their respective courses off Round Island in 36.5 hours. Fourteen boats finished, three retired, and the last boat made it home at a quarter to five on Sunday afternoon.

As predicted, the front arrived at about



2100 as the slower boats were lying off Cheung Sha Beach. Most of the faster boats (except *Tolo*) had retrieved their runners and left. *Scintilla's* runners were paddling ashore when, suddenly, there was 30 knots of wind — with gusts of

40 — and confused seas, pushing them backwards. There was little chance of reaching the shore but in the area at the time was IRC A boat, *Arcturus*, which managed to haul the two kayakers on board. They were then transferred by the safety RIB to the committee boat. Given the circumstances, both *Arcturus* and *Scintilla* retired.

The runners from HKPN A entry, *Lisa Elaine*, ran into similar difficulties trying to return through the surf from the beach. They, too, decided to retire.

Meanwhile, in the control room back at the Aberdeen Boat Club, the TracTrac tracking system gave positions of all the boats on a big screen in (almost) real time. Great but, for obvious reasons, this could not be relayed to the competitors!

First home at 06:59:24 was HKPN B entry, *Vixen*, followed by *Tuatahi*

*Decathlon*, and Chris Lavender's *Tamandu*. *Authority* persevered to reach Round Island at 17:45:22. Well done.

Among the faster boats, first to cross the finish line was seasoned Four Peaks campaigner, *Blackjack*, helmed by John Currie, at 09:12:24. Next was the superbly-sailed *Red Kite II*, with Philippe Delorme in charge. Last to reach Round Island was Jon Cannon's *Tolo*, at 15:12:24.

As for the running times, *Red Kite II's* runners cleaned up on all four peaks — a highly commendable achievement. Anthony Tsang (*Authority*) and Wong Yu Him (*Vixen*) climbed all four peaks. This has been done before but is still worthy of much praise.

The Four Peaks Race is known for its sheer number of prizes (33) and, hey, why not? It is multi-dimensional and has so many facets that the organiser really

should reward all the achievers. The awards this year came in three categories: Running, Sailing and Spirit.

Overall 1st in IRC was *Red Kite II* with *Blackjack* 2nd and *Juggerknot* 3rd. HKPN B was won by *Tamandu* followed by *Shun Shui* and *Five O One*.

In the Spirit category, deserved winner was *Arcturus* for its rescue of the exhausted paddlers at Cheung Sha Beach.

The Four Peaks Race has shone, in our opinion, as the Aberdeen Boat Club's signature event for 36 consecutive years. Conceived by Stephen Davies, the first

Four Peaks was held in 1985 and, although based on the British Three Peaks Race, the local version has developed its own identity and is well suited to Hong Kong. In short, it is special.

Race stewarding and safety management (this year Alex Johnston and Jennifer Li) from the club contribute to the success of each edition. Beneteau, and its regional partner Simpson Marine, has given its support and, in fact there were two Beneteaus competing this year.

The event has, naturally, evolved over the years but has stuck to the same four peaks. There have been calls to "toughen up" the premier division and there is a good chance the race will be "going back to basics next year". Watch this space . . .

