

The 25th Four Peaks Race was held on the 17th and 18th of January 2009 and produced the usual cocktail of drama, elation . . . and disappointment. A northeast winter monsoon brought cold and cloudy conditions to Hong Kong but the weekend generally stayed dry.

The 15 entrants were segregated into a competitive IRC fleet with *Whiskey Jack* and *Cloud* favoured to contest line honours and an able fleet of cruisers making up the HKPN Division.

As the crews gathered on the Patio at the Aberdeen Boat Club, race officer Wayne Thompson studied the recorded wind patterns at Waglan from the previous 24 hours but announced that he would wait until on station in Tai Tam before selecting the long or short course. Ah, the suspense . . .

The race relies on the support of many volunteers to man peak controls, safety boats and race control. This year, the

core of veteran volunteers were joined by some new hands who would greatly contribute to the success of the race.

The message had gone out at the skippers' briefing that any gifts for the peak controllers would be gratefully received as the night promised to be very

cold. The crews duly responded with the best ever selection of miniatures and personalized spirits being carried up to the top of the peaks. At the start, the breeze was a good 14 knots from the northeast and Thompson decided on the long course. A windward mark was laid some half a mile into Tai Tam Bay before the yachts had to turn southeast to lay Fury Rocks to port. The fleet made a handsome sight in the brisk conditions, against the backdrop of a windswept Cape d'Aguilar, heading

out of the Beaufort Channel.

Sadly, the northeasterly didn't last and the first leg up to Ma On Shan turned out to be one of the slowest in recent years. It was past 1500 before the leading boats appeared in the approaches to Sai Kung. Many took the option for their runners to drop off on the peninsula, or take a long paddle into the harbour. At this point the lead was being contested by *Whiskey Jack*, *Harlequin*, *Cloud* and *Kam Loong*.

The Ma On Shan Peak prize was awarded to Nick Tinworth and Damien Levy from *The Farr Side* with a time of 2:14:12

The return to Lamma Island via the Ninepins was a slow, agonizing affair for all the crews as the wind almost completely died and concentration had to make the most of any passing

zephyrs. At the top of Mount Stenhouse, *Harlequin* had managed to gain time on all of its closest competitors and the Peak Prize went to runners Ross Dawson and Andy Pickles in 57 minutes.

In Division B, *Koala* decided to change to the Motoring Division on the way back from Sai Kung but completed the full course with runner Brandon Fielding getting a special prize for climbing all four peaks. Another runner who achieved this memorable feat

closed in on Violet Hill and the finish line. *Harlequin* made it three in a row as runners Greg Farleigh and Cosmo Richards came off the hill in a time of 58 minutes.

Rhapsody took line honours in Division B with an elapsed time of 29:39:05 and won the Edwin Palfrey trophy for Division B HKPN on corrected time.

A dash to the finish by *Whiskey Jack* ensured line honours in a time of 31:08:46. *Whiskey Jack* also claimed the Four Peaks Race

Shield for IRC with *Harlequin* collecting the RHKYC San Fernando Trophy for HKPN.

As always, the Four Peaks Race provided testing conditions and required skills, endurance and teamwork from all the competitors. May there be many more!



Kei Lun (top right), public pier landing in Sai Kung (above), *Cloud* and *Whiskey Jack* leave Tai Tam (below) and paddle power (right)



Four Peaks RACE

was Andy Jepps from *ATE*.

Among the IRC entries, the race was on between *Whiskey Jack*, *Cloud*, *Harlequin* and *Kam Loong* as their runners ascended Lantau Peak. On the return to the gate the *Harlequin* pair, Ben Blaine and Jeremy Ritcey, had blown away the competition with a very fast time of 1:24:16.

But it was still very close between the leading four yachts. The race was going to be won, and lost, on the leg to Repulse Bay and the tactics for the last climb.

Race control was alive with expectation throughout the Sunday afternoon and the early evening as the leading boats

Four Peaks Race 2009 RESULTS		
Division A	Division B	
1 Whiskey Jack	1	Rhapsody
2 Harlequin		
3 Cloud		
Hill Running		
Ma On Shan	The Farr Side	2:14:12
Mount Stenhouse	Harlequin	0:57:00
Lantau Peak	Harlequin	1:24:16
Violet Hill	Harlequin	0:58:00