

FOUR PEAKS RACE

Hong Kong's first Four Peaks Race was held in 1985, and took in Ma On Shan, Lantau Peak, Mt Stenhouse and Violet Hill (in that order). Inspired by Britain's Three Peaks Race, founder Stephen Davies wanted to create an equivalent with local characteristics. That meant cutting from a week to a weekend — in Hong Kong, sailors are a busy lot and the local topography singular. He drafted an intense 36-hour challenge, threw in an extra peak, and attracted an astonishing 16 entries. Sadly, the wind didn't co-operate and there were only six finishers . . . but the spirit of the Four Peaks endured.

Over its 27 years, the Aberdeen Boat Club's Four Peaks Race has seen as many as 30 entries

on the water (1996). This year, 23 boats gathered in Tai Tam Bay on Saturday, the 29th of January. Sixteen Division A boats crossed the line at 1100 and tacked into a brisk northeasterly for a windward mark before setting off on Course 1 (85 nautical miles). Division B and Motoring started five minutes later, Course 4 (40 nautical miles), among them *Cuchulain*, the only boat in the fleet to have competed in the inaugural event!

Then, drama as *Rubia* collided with *Darling*, both boats retiring. But the rest sailed on, the Div A boats making for Sai Kung, Div B boats for Castle Rock.

Over the years, notably between 1992 and 2004, there have been changes to the courses, usually to the sequence of peaks following Ma On Shan. This year saw a new peak replace Violet Hill for the Div A boats — Peak 300 on Cap d'Aguilar. It provided variety for veterans and a challenge for those who find Violet Hill too easy. No harm in bringing in new peaks, in our opinion; the Four Peaks can easily handle change.

Best to keep it at four peaks, though. In 2005, Div B did a three-peak race. Somehow, this takes some meaning out of their efforts as this year they climbed Peak 300, Violet Hill and Stenhouse. How can they say they 'did the Four Peaks' when they only did three? The committee could consider Pottinger Peak (above Cape Collinson), High Junk Peak (above Clearwater Bay) or even go back to



Red Kite II in Tai Tam (top right) and runners leave Peak Control on Mt Stenhouse (main)

using Po Toi which proved quite successful in 1997 as it cut out the long overnight haul to Lantau for the slower boats.

After a fast beat up the eastern shoreline off Clearwater Bay and into Port Shelter, *Jack*,

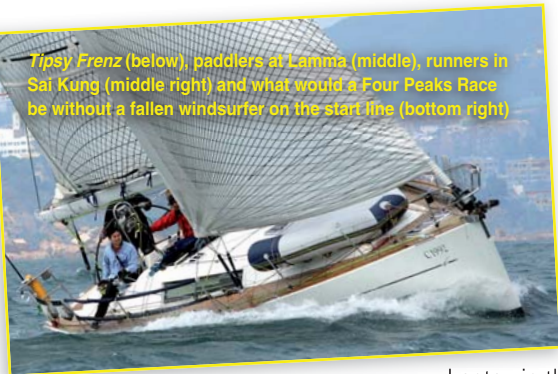
Wicked, *Red Kite II*, *Talkinghead* and *Tipsy Frenz* were landing their runners for Ma On Shan around 1330 and were out of Port Shelter, rounding East Ninepin and heading for Waglan by 1700. The Div B boats, by this time, had collected their runners from Peak 300 and were leaving Tai Tam, rounding Castle Rock, or making for their next peak, Violet Hill.

As darkness fell, the Div A leaders were landing their runners for Peak 300 which proved a cinch for the teams from *Wicked* (00:41:39) and *Black Jack* who got up and down in under an hour! From there it was around Castle Rock to Tao Lo Chau in the Soko Islands. Spinnakers were flown making for fast times, 8-9 knots in *Brizo* for example, and demanding crew work — no time for laying about in this overnigher.

Back at the ABC, in the Four Peaks

— continued overleaf

Tipsy Frenz (below), paddlers at Lamma (middle), runners in Sai Kung (middle right) and what would a Four Peaks Race be without a fallen windsurfer on the start line (bottom right)



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Control Room, volunteers kept an eye and ear on everyone, logging times and keeping track of who was where.

Lan Ying landed its runner just after midnight and soon the Div A boats, running across from Lantau, were offloading their canoes and dinghies at Power Station and the various favoured inlets and coves on the western side of the island.

The Stenhouse Peak Control was kept busy through the night until midday Sunday, with Div A and Div B runners passing each other on the way to the top of this rugged peak with its magnificent views of Hong Kong Island, the big ship anchorage to the south and Lema Islands beyond.

After leaving Stenhouse, the faster



Lantau in the dark has always been a challenge. Especially coming ashore at Cheung Sha Beach. The shore break has caught many an unwary paddler who, riding the swells, expecting to be carried obligingly up the beach by the rushing water, is unceremoniously dumped and tumbled, emerging sodden wet with shoes full of sand and a canoe full of water.



Wicked's runners put in a fine effort and did Lantau Peak in 1:28:08. But Leg 3 took its toll on the slower boats and the Div A fleet was well spread out by the time *Rhumb Punch's* runners paddled away from the beach just before lunch on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Div B runners had tackled Violet Hill and were busy groping around in the darkness on Mt Stenhouse, possibly the trickiest of all the peaks. Tales of runners lost are too many to tell, and a wrong turn or mistaken path can prove costly in time lost.



boats were given a bit more to do by rounding Castle Rock off Beaufort Island before finishing of Round Island. Div B went from Stenhouse, around Chesterman Buoy and finished at the same place.

Winner in the IRC division was *Wicked*, crossing the line at 05:10:47 on Sunday morning. After 11 attempts, skipper Tristan Stuart was a mighty pleased man. Among his crew, incidentally, was Elaine Morgan, who also took part in that first 1985 race. "Year by year we learn how to do it better yet it never gets easier," she said. "But it's always wonderful to take part."



In the HKPN division, *Black Jack* took the honours with a corrected time of 20:58:16 with *Wicked* in 2nd (21:30:56) and *Whiskey Jack* 3rd (22:56:29). Division B HKPN was won by *Rhapsody* in a corrected time of 13:11:45. The last Div B boat, *Chota Scye*, crossed the finish at 08:56:47 . . . good reason to consider that fourth peak for these 'slower' boats.

Noted achievements included the climbing of all four peaks by two runners from *Tipsy Frenz* and two from *GA*, line honours by *Rhapsody* which finished at 01:06:56, and *Cuchulain* which persevered to the bitter end, finishing at 17:52:47 on Sunday!

The prizegiving was held on the verandah of the ABC on Friday, the 11th of February 2011. Sailors, runners, families and friends were entertained by race officer, Stephen Davies, and a photo presentation by *Fragrant Harbour*.



Thanks were given to the sponsor, Aedas, and the

many volunteers (70+) who made the race possible. Prizes were presented, including *Fragrant Harbour's* Spirit of the Race Oris timepiece to Steve Metz (right) of *Koala*. After the buffet, skippers were asked to give their recollections which wrapped up a very successful Four Peaks Race 2011.

