Catching every last drop of wind

EPA Four Peaks Race

Held over the weekend of the 30th and 31st January 1988, the EPA Four Peaks Race attracted a field of 20 boats and involved more than 300 people. The race started at 12 noon, Saturday, off Shek-O and the last boat crossed the line at 9.00pm, Sunday, in Repulse Bay.

After a frustrating, almost windless sail up to Sai Kung and back down to Lantau, conditions greatly improved on Sunday morning and there were reports of winds above 30 knots. Approaching the dropping zones on Saturday some boats even resorted to rowing to gain time.

The race was divided into two divisions – A and B – division A being strictly sailing and division B allowing the use of motors for up to 15% of elapsed time without penalty. Most boats in division B used this provision to the full and those using motors for more than the 15% of elapsed time were penalised accordingly.

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There was a minimum of five crew, including runners, per boat. Everybody had to climb one of the four mountains: Ma On Shan, Lantau Peak, Mt Stenhouse and Violet Hill. The race committee, following pleas from wives, doctors and the less able, decided to make an exemption for "portly skippers" which is why the minimum crew had to number five instead of four.

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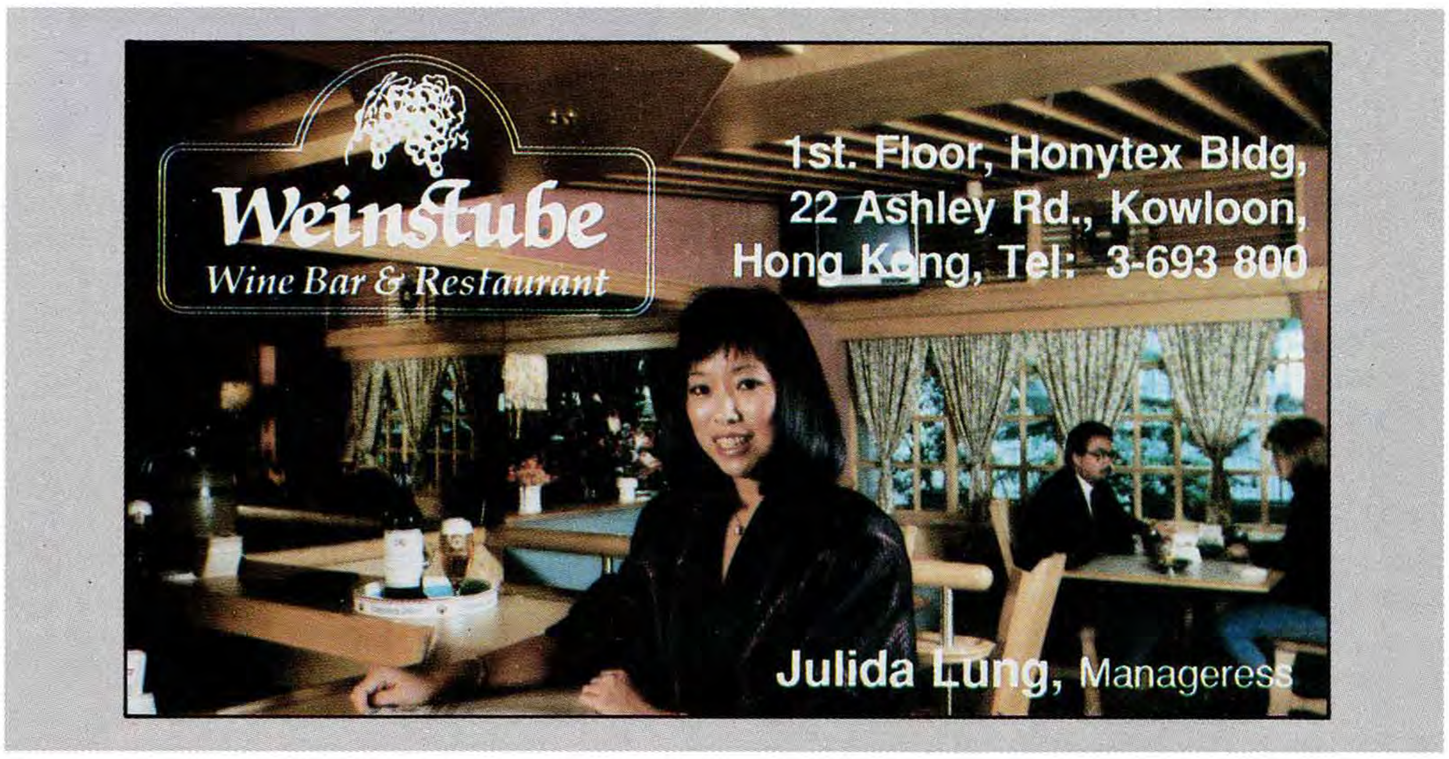
The biggest mountain was Lantau Peak but judging by the state of the runners it appeared Stenhouse, although relatively small, was a more gruelling climb. There are few paths up Stenhouse and much of the climb is over rough terrain.

Plenty of wind on the Sunday (top), surveying the scene (bottom)

The sizes of boats that entered the race ranged from 25' to 45', the smaller boats generally faring better because of the light airs. A couple of boats didn't make it – Buckshot wasn't able to get it's runners ashore at Lamma and White Dragon, the Army's boat, just missed the cutoff.

The Army's assistance in stationing and manning the mountain check points proved invaluable. Choppers were used to drop in teams of men from the Gurkha Regiment who set up tents, took times and gave much needed support to the runners.

Edwin Palfrey & Associates Ltd, the official sponsors of the race, arranged a buffet meal at the Aberdeen Boat Club on 5th February and prizes were awarded to the various successful competitors. Shabu Shabu won the division A trophy and the runner up was Fiddler's Green II. Division B was won by Luo Shen.

We have heard that a video has been made of the event. Contact Alan MacCabe 5-8335141 if you'd like to see yourself on the silver screen.