

The 2007 Montreal One Design Regatta Report

By Stephanie Whittaker

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As your faithful reporter, I am tasked with telling you what transpired last weekend (Aug. 4 and 5) during the 2007 version of the Montreal One Design Regatta at the Pointe-Claire Yacht Club.

But before I start, I figure this is as good a time as any to report on the quality of the water in Lake St. Louis.

Those of you who have sailed a long time upon said lake and remember what a cesspool it was before our visionary civic leaders decided that lakes are not synonymous with sewage treatment facilities, will be happy to learn that the water is.....well, not bad. I know this because I spent much of Day One of the MODR swimming in it, swallowing it, snorting it (woo-hoo, shades of the 60s), inhaling it (unlike President Bill, I DID inhale) and just being generally anointed by it at every opportunity I could get. And because the winds were pretty darn brisk on Saturday, there were many opportunities to take samples of the water to test for quality. Three times, to be precise.

My skipper, Jason Magder, seemed equally eager to learn more about the quality of the lake water. So as we rounded the weather mark during Race One, we capsized our boat and spent lots of time getting water samples and storing said samples in our ears, stomachs and the boat's cockpit. Alas, because we did not gather enough scientific information at that time, we had no choice but to capsize twice more. My memory is hazy about when the second dumping occurred but I do remember that the third one

took place shortly before the beginning of the fourth race before we could even get across the start line. As we bobbed in the water and watched the five other contenders cross the start line, moving ever farther away from us, we knew that our very important scientific research work - the gathering of more water samples - would make the fact that we were SO going to lose that race (and would have to haul our sorry tushes across the finish line hours after everyone else had returned the clubhouse for a beer) all more worth it.

What did Jason and I learn about the quality of the water that day? We learned that the water in Lake St. Louis has a deeply organic smell and taste. But when we say “organic,” we don’t mean “organic” in the sanguine, wholesome-pesticide-free-veggie-and-crunchy-granola-Birkenstock way. No, we mean “organic” in the rotting-weeds-seagull-droppings-and-dead-fish sort of way.

But enough of the water talk. You’ll be able to read all about the lake water quality in the fascinating 600-page report Jason and I plan to prepare during our leisure hours for the Ministry of the Environment.

Meanwhile, let us turn our attention to what went down during the 2007 MODR.

While I’d like to be able to tell you about all the other classes of boats that participated, I know nothing of how they fared because they were miles away on other race courses and my focus was on staying upright and not taking any more water samples for scientific research than I absolutely had to. So for the sake of this report, we’ll focus exclusively on the Fireball fleet.

Our merry little band consisted of six boats. Their occupants included Joe Jospe and Tom Egli, Robbie Levy

and Stephen Waldie, Malcolm van Haeften and Pierre Carpentier, Ches Upham and his sister, Paula Stone and David Johnston and Jason and me.

Saturday brought high winds. I am told they ranged in strength from 15 to 25 knots. As a newish sailor, I wouldn't know a knot from a gnat. But what I do know with certainty is that those winds were very, very shifty. As shifty as your basic door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman. As shifty as a mafia don staring down a racketeering charge in front of a grand jury. As shifty as the late, lamented Saddam Hussein during a U.N. weapons inspection. As shifty as a woman's mood in menopause. As shifty as Richard Nixon in 1973.

And they were gusty. As gusty as a hack writer desperately groping for inane similes about shiftiness.

Anyway, suffice to say that the winds were shifty and gusty. And that meant that the entire fleet had to stay hyper-focused and not relax its vigil for a second lest it end up doing unplanned scientific research into water quality. In fact, Robbie Levy and Stephen Waldie did a bit of water quality testing themselves. Twice, apparently. We also watched Ches Upham and his sister do a bit of water quality testing during the fourth race as they rounded the gybe mark. That's how shifty and gusty the winds were on Saturday.

After all that water testing, Jason and I found ourselves somewhat exhausted with the struggle as we headed to the weather mark for the second time during the last race on Saturday. So we decided to call it quits and head back to the clubhouse for an emergency latte.

By Sunday, however, the lake was becalmed. We'd like to use the word "phlegmatic" here but fear we'll be

viewed as pretentious. In fact, we've been looking for an opportunity to drop "perspicacious" into this report but the opportunity has not yet arisen. Anyway, suffice to say the wind was definitely not shifty and gusty on Sunday.

So, as the fleet headed out to the start line in slow motion, there was plenty of time to file one's nails (what's left of them after this sailing season), to discuss one's summer project of re-reading all of Proust, Dostoyevsky and Nabokov (not!) and to figure out a strategy for the two remaining races.

The start was delayed by about an hour while the race committee decided where to set the course. Our fleet of six boats sailed in mellow, laid-back circles, awaiting the gun, while we all hurled "Hi neighbour. How's it goin'?" greetings at each other over the gunwales.

Then we all sailed two races. There was no water quality testing done that day and somehow, Jason and I placed third in the fifth race. Alas, in the sixth, we zigged when the rest of the fleet zagged and we placed fifth.

Joe and Robbie were kibitzing at the start line and they got off to a latish beginning but they placed first and second respectively anyway.

You'll be wondering by now who won the regatta. Well, that honour went to Joe and Tom. It seems Robbie and Stephen spent the whole regatta anxiously watching the transom of Joe's boat. So they placed second.

Malcolm and Pierre placed a respectable third. And Jason and I (and this really surprised us given how much scientific water testing research we had done on Saturday) placed fourth. Ches and his sister placed fifth and Paula and David placed sixth.

It's a cheap cliché to end any report with “a good time was had by all.” Except that in this instance, it's true. All the Fireballers had a rollicking good time during the 2007 MODR (and I do mean rollicking during the Saturday races), even those of us who spent more time than we had planned assessing the quality of the lake water.