

Aboard *First Sight*, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the crew celebrates Canada Day.

# A Mother of a Race

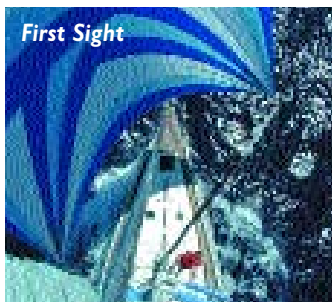
AT THIS YEAR'S VIC-MAUI, MOTHER NATURE SERVED UP SOME TRULY CHALLENGING CONDITIONS. AND FOR MANY RACERS, IT WAS ONE TOUGH LESSON AT SEA.



RON SMITH PHOTO

BY PAMELA BENDALL

**M**arathon ocean races like the Vic-Maui Classic are often remembered for the winds, roughness of the seas and the toll the conditions take on the sailors. Certainly, Vic-Maui 2002 taxed its participants in many different ways, reminding us of the respect that Mother Nature and this great race



Although some crews enjoyed a fairly boisterous start, for others it was reminiscent of the recent *Swiftsure*—members in the first fleet were forced to deploy their anchors in Juan de Fuca Strait to avoid drifting backward in the flooding tide. Then, just off Cape Flattery as land faded from the horizon, an unseasonable storm, with winds of 55kts and seas over 30' descended on the sailors for up to 36 hours.

Minor equipment failures occurred on several boats during the storm, however, seasickness and deteriorating morale was the



**First Sight** glides out into Juan de Fuca Strait under spinnaker (left). For her crew, this year's Vic-Maui "tested all aspects of racing."

**Fastrack** (below), the boat whose preparations PY followed in the months leading upon to the race, had a disappointing race. After surviving the punishing storm that opened the race, they got becalmed and eventually had to withdraw.



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SIMON HILL PHOTOS

greatest culprit causing two boats, *Fastrack* and *Time Bandit*, to withdraw. *Swept Away* also had three of the six-crew members experience extreme seasickness aboard and withdrew a short time later.

**FEAST TO FAMINE** As if Mother Nature had not tested the racers enough, she then dished out an even more challenging set of conditions: the doldrums. Day after day, the notorious Pacific High hovered over most of the fleet leaving them wallowing in a virtual pond, sails and rigging slapping back and forth, as they inched their way towards Lahaina.

Meanwhile, anxious race organizers, family members and return crews were gathering in Hawaii in anticipation of a reception that, for some, never materialized, despite an extension of the finish deadline by an extra four days to allow slower boats a

**Vic-Maui 2002 Final Results**

(In order of placement)

Boat Name	Elapsed Time	Corrected Time
<b>Mystic</b>	12:09:29:02	10:04:16:18
<b>Icon</b>	10:11:48:06	10:04:44:58
<b>Atalanta</b>	12:20:14:41	10:04:46:29
<b>Renegade</b>	11:13:43:12	11:13:43:12
<b>Jeito</b>	14:08:35:09	12:13:37:53
<b>Show Me</b>	15:22:01:02	13:01:25:06
<b>Mojo Riding</b>	17:01:36:33	13:02:43:29
<b>First Sight</b>	17:12:56:55	13:14:42:19
<b>Greyhound</b>	18:02:22:36	13:12:44:48
<b>Charlemagne</b>	18:05:17:49	13:15:40:01
<b>Surt</b>	18:17:29:23	14:08:59:19
<b>Piper</b>	20:15:26:03	15:18:06:39

respectable finish.

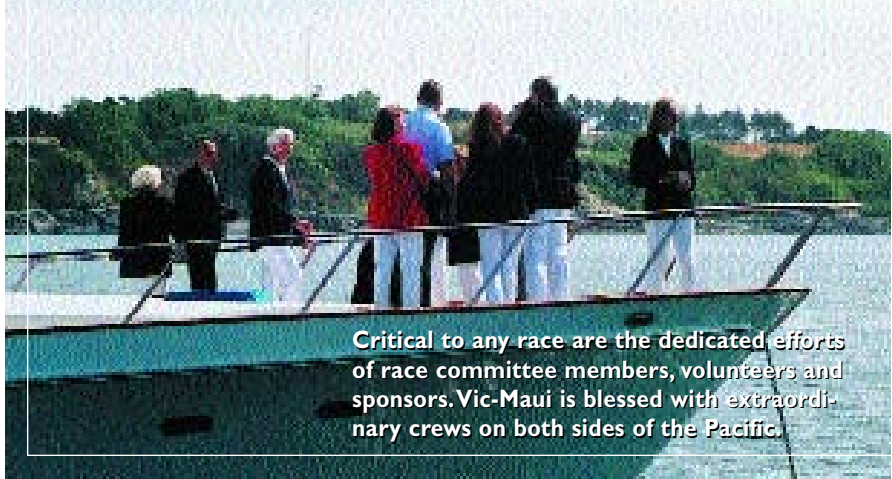
*Grand Illusion's* course record of 9 days, 2 hours set in 2000 was never remotely at risk. However, it was a close race on corrected time with 65' *Icon* taking line honors, but correcting to second overall to *Mystic*, a Santa Cruz 52. Both boats hail from Seattle, and both chose a slightly more southern route which got them to the trade winds ahead of the rest. Both



sailed formidable races, finishing just a half hour apart on corrected time—a tribute to the sophisticated handicapping system developed by RVYC's Don Martin.

"Ugly" is how Vancouver firefighter and race veteran Greg Roberts describes the race. With only 350 miles behind them, he made the heartbreaking decision to withdraw from the race and return to Vancouver. (Naturally, once headed home they had a fabulous sail the entire way). "We did the math, and after five days and virtually no wind, I knew I would never get to Maui and home within our time restraints." A justified decision? No question. Greg had a particularly important appointment with his fiancé, Leah, at the altar!

**NEVER A DULL MOMENT** *Charlemange* and *Greyhound*, identical J36s in the C division, battled the 2,308 mile race—staying in sight of one another for 12 of the 18 days. Ultimately, *Greyhound* finished a scant



Critical to any race are the dedicated efforts of race committee members, volunteers and sponsors. Vic-Maui is blessed with extraordinary crews on both sides of the Pacific.

SIMON HILL PHOTO

three three hours in front. It could have been closer, but Marlene Bolster, *Charlemange's* skipper, reported a broken main halyard midway through the race, forcing them to sail with a double-reefed main for three days until they managed to make repairs. Bolster now strongly suggests having several spare halyards aboard, and in hindsight would have brought at least one more spinnaker.

Skipper Gary Schoenrock of the Irwin 52-3 *Niye Keema* out of Anacortes, found

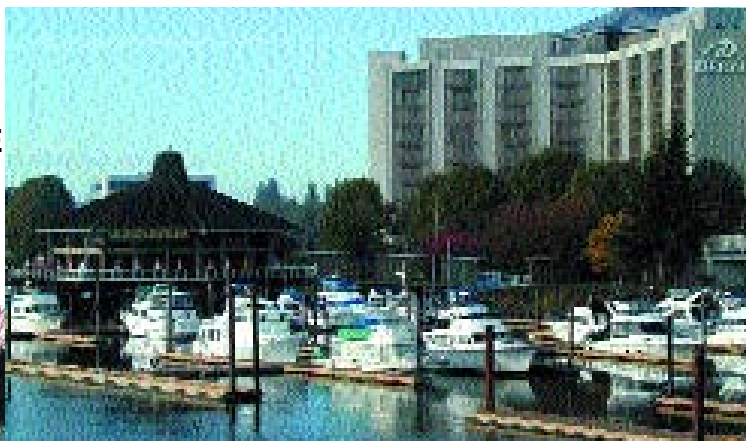
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The Vic-Maui 2002 winners' circle isn't exclusive to first, second and third place finishers. Other prestigious trophies such as the Byrd Award, which recognizes a crew for "having too much fun," are up for grabs (and widely sought after). The crew aboard *Piper* were this year's proud recipients. The award was donated by the Lahaina Goosing Society.

The notorious **Pacific High** hovered over most of the fleet leaving them **wallowing in a virtual pond.**

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it valuable to keep the spirits of his crew high throughout the race, despite the unexpected extra week at sea. Thanks to Hawaiian grass skirt parties and celestial navigation contests (contests that required extensive pre-race preparation) his crew never experienced a dull moment despite the dull wind conditions. But eventually he too had to face the reality of time. Fuel for battery charging was running short (although beer and food reserves were still abundant!) and families and friends were awaiting their arrival in Lahaina, but the boat was hardly moving. The decision to put the engine in gear was very emotional, explained crew member Peter Graf. "Our skipper democratically asked each crew individually for his thoughts on terminating the race. We were 1,000 miles from Maui and covering 1.3nm/hour. We had made 38 miles the previous day. We might still be out there if we hadn't put the engine in gear!"

As it was, the crew of *Niye Keema* crossed



**In Lahaina, the crew of *Icon* whoop it up in traditional Vic-Maui style.**

the finish line at midnight and boarded their scheduled flights home six hours later. So much time, energy, money and emotion had been tied up in the race, but when the engine finally engaged it was, in many ways, a great relief.

**FRUSTRATION** Crews aboard *Surt*, *Niye Keema*, *HMCS Oriole*, *Piper* and *Rusty Unit* were wonderful sportsmen under trying circumstances—unable to reach the fin-

ish line until after the gala Awards Banquet. As always, Lahaina Yacht Club hosted a fabulous Hawaiian party, although the head count of 250 was understandably down from the 400 who attended in 2000. For many of the crewmembers of the final boats to arrive, the frustration was compounded by inflexible flight schedules that meant loyal friends and supporters came and left Maui before the boats crossed the line.

But in all cases, the trials of the open ocean are forgotten once racers reach

Lahaina where the Reception Committee, led by Karen and John Domingo, takes over. Each boat is greeted by a local host boat and smothered with leis, Hawaiian dancers, exotic food and beverages, and a host of celebrations last until the final boat crosses the line. Lahaina Yacht Club had additional logistical challenges at the finish line

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due to delayed boats and re-scheduling, and by all accounts, they cheerfully rose to the challenge without a glitch.

For Scott Crawshaw, skipper of Canada's illustrious navy training vessel *HMCS Oriole*, the race culminated in quite a grand finale. The 2002 Vic-Maui was Crawshaw's fourth and final race, and time constraints forced Scott and his 26-crew members to motor across the finish line and immediately sail to Honolulu to attend his retirement celebration and *Oriole's* official Change of Command Ceremony. Incoming skipper, LCdr. Gary Davis boasts of a fabulous sail home to Victoria on only one starboard tack the entire 15 days.

**LESSONS LEARNED** Every race is a learning experience, and the 2002 Vic-Maui taught a few lessons. Aside from Bolster's recommendation for spare sails and rigging equipment and Schoenrock's emphasis on maintaining team spirit, perhaps the most common recommendation is the importance of pre-race team building and practice. Not only does this help the crew become familiar with all aspects of the boat, but it also ensures a sense of familiarity and cooperation amongst the team, particularly when conditions require longer passages. And after this year's light winds, a common thought was that it's also wise for friends, supporters and crewmembers to schedule plenty of time at the finish line to allow a leisurely reception in Lahaina no matter when the boat arrives. Extra provisions are critical should light winds prevail longer than expected. Perhaps most importantly, be prepared for all circumstances—you never know what the Vic-Maui will throw your way.


**OVERCOMING ADVERSITY** Despite it all, Maple Bay resident Don Taylor, owner and skipper of *First Sight*, says he believes this race was far more interesting and challenging than his three previous Vic-Maui races. "The adversity we experienced gave us an even greater feeling of accomplishment at the finish. Our crew had to work harder than before and maximize their efforts in both boathandling and navigation. This Vic-Maui has given us a new respect for the race and the conditions we potentially face on the ocean. Ultimately, it tested all aspects of racing, and our crew rose to the occasion."


So although the 2002 Vic-Maui will not go down in history for records set, or the


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