

Whispering Palms Race
Lagos Yacht Club - Fleet 510
Lagos, Nigeria
August 30-31, 2008

Pos	Sail#	Name	Helm	Crew
1	15267	"Shango"	Kevin King	Bob Bielinski, Doug Gratwick
2	15326	"Mystique"	Gary Schwantz	Lindy Edwards, Susan King
3	15324	"Tusen Tak"	Knut Engebretson	Barbra Tak,

Day broke with overcast skies and medium rain which did not bode well for the forthcoming long creek race. This is an annual event sponsored by one of our long serving members, Kevin O'Farrel.

Course is from Lagos Yacht Club, through the harbour and then westwards along Badagry Creek towards the border with the Republic of Benin. This creek is tidal for half it's length and runs parallel to the beach, separated by palm groves and mangrove swamps. Finish for day one was scheduled to be at the "Whispering Palms" hotel where fleet would party overnight and then return the following day.

The 1100 hr start had to be delayed due to thunder and lightning around. However, by noon, this had cleared and a steady westerly wind had established itself. A fleet of eleven Lightnings, one Osprey and one Hobie 16 crossed the start line at 1230 hrs.

Unfortunately the wind was right on the nose and, although the race started at the beginning of the flood, a long haul ensued.

Interestingly with creek racing the wind direction is not consistent. A bit like a tunnel effect, none of the land is higher than 30ft so the wind is channelled by the trees to follow the creek, particularly where it narrows. (creek has width varying from 40m to 1000m)

The wind increased to about 12 mph but with occasional strong gusts. In one of these our one woodie participant (fifty years old), helmed by Don Third, had the upper shroud pop out of the spreader and lost the top of her mast.

All the way up was a constant beat. The front group of six boats stayed very close together with the lead changing frequently, particularly in the challenging narrows where local knowledge of currents and shallows really came into play.

As sunset approached the wind was dropping and the course had to be shortened before our destination to enable the stragglers to be towed in. Our accompanying rescue boat dropped a finishing mark and the first boat crossed the line at 1820 hrs. A leisurely sail for the front group then continued the last few miles to "Whispering Palms" arriving there just on sunset.

An exhausted fleet could barely do justice to the dinner and party that followed before crawling off to bed.

The following morning we woke to good winds, still from the West, and overcast skies. After a hearty breakfast for those who had behaved the night before, (and some strong black coffees for those who hadn't), the crews went down to rig the boats for the return race.

After the slog of the day before, we knew we were now in for some excitement. A spinnaker run all the way back to Lagos.

Generally the 'kite' can be flown about 80% of the time due to changes of direction in the narrow sections but, today, the spinnakers were flown throughout. The wind was 10 - 15 mph, gusting up to 20 mph at times leading to some exciting planing and even more exhilarating (scary) gybes. Again the fleet changed position many times although the lead boat stayed clear.

The first Lightning crossed the finishing line at Lagos Yacht Club at 1430 with a sailing time of 3.5 hrs with the following fleet arriving within the next half hour.

Interestingly one crew member, Bob Bielinski, had a GPS (switched on but not used during the race) which recorded the following:

Journey up (beating) 29.9 miles av spd 4.8 knts

Journey down (run) 23.0 miles av spd 6.6 knts

Both above were tide assisted.

The final overall results were :

A special mention must be given to our lady crews who had a particularly tough race to contend with but remained enthusiastic throughout. Also our Nigerian members, many for whom this was their first long creek race. Thanks to Ogale, Denis, Amy, Wendy Emmanuel, Ben, Joe & John

PS: On the leisurely cruise from finish line to 'Whispering Palms' one of our helms nearly died of fright. A manatee surfaced next to his boat. Not sure who was shocked most. Manatee (estimated to be ten feet long) then dived and splash reached halfway up mast.

