

Racing



A wet and wild blast from Auckland to Russell left *Boating* staff writer and V5 mid-bowman Ben Gladwell wondering if the Coastal Classic could get any better?

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I am never doing the Coastal Classic again. It doesn't matter which skipper asks me, what the conditions are like, or who else is on board – it will be impossible to top this year's race.

Coastal races are often long, gruelling, drawn-out affairs with the winners not decided until the final miles. But for us on the TP52 *V5*, the race for monohull line honours was won inside the first three miles.

October 19 brought with it typical weather in what should be renamed the City of Gales, with 35-knot winds blowing from the sou'west – near perfect conditions for 167 of the fastest boats in New Zealand to blast 119 miles up the Northland coast to Russell in the Bay of Islands.

As if the strong winds weren't enough for the racers to contend with, a large container ship decided to make its way up the harbour, directly through the middle of the fleet, around five minutes before the start.

On board *V5* we got away with the Division One

starters just to leeward of our main competition and last year's monohull winner, the Bakewell-White 52 *Wired*. We decided to live (or die) by the mantra 'go hard or go home' and hoisted our biggest gennaker, the A2, which blasted us off to leeward of *Wired* and the rest of the fleet. Rival TP52 *Georgia* had also made a fast start.

After the first gybe in the middle of the Rangitoto Channel the two TPs surged to the head of the fleet, both trying desperately to sail high enough to make it around Rangitoto Lighthouse.

As we crossed the channel we looked behind us to see a squall ripping through the fleet, causing wipe-outs and gear failure left and right. *Ran Tan II* lost control and wound up with their spreaders in the water and the keel canted the wrong way, while *Akatea* suffered a broken bowsprit and was forced to retire.

Unfortunately for *Georgia*, they were the windward of the two lead boats and so first to cop the freshening

V5 shortly after the start



Crusader

Photo Richard Gladwell



Ran Tan II

Photo Richard Gladwell



breeze which left them lying on their side with their kite flogging violently as the first gust blew through. Fortunately, we were able to bear away and hastily drop our gennaker.

Having managed this, we reached off under jib, powering away from our competitors at 22-23 knots towards Rangitoto Lighthouse. Once clear of the headland we bore away and hoisted the fractional gennaker. This was a defining move, as most of the other boats seemed content under jib, allowing V5 to streak ahead, hitting speeds of 28.4 knots and pull out a solid lead as we flew past Flat Rock.

As the fleet rounded the rock, our course took us further nor' west, bringing the breeze forward, almost beam on. We hoisted our large reaching jib and staysail, blast-reaching and surfing along at speeds hovering between 20 and 22 knots. As we powered along the coast, smashing down

Photo Greg Treadwell



Borderline

Photo Greg Treadwell

and through the swells, huge torrents of water crashed over the decks and into the cockpit. The legs of the crew, most of whom had their feet over the rail, were repeatedly bashed together as we were hit by waves. But regardless of how much water we were doused with, it was impossible to wash away the giddy grins plastered to the faces of everyone on board.

The race now became a game of chess. The boats behind us were making all the moves, either heading closer to the shore to take a shorter route or heading further offshore in search of more wind. All we could do was put ourselves in the best possible position to respond should someone start making serious gains.

Our main concern was *Wired*. They worked their way up to windward under jib, before hoisting a gennaker and rocketing up behind us and down to

leeward, but issues with the halyard lock system on their masthead kite caused them to involuntarily drop their sail into the water on two occasions. This effectively negated any advantage that they gained from putting up a larger sail and they dropped back to be 20 minutes behind us as we rounded Cape Brett.

Once through the gap between the Cape and Peircy Island we were confident that, barring any hiccups, victory would be ours. The hiccup came with about five miles to go when a block at the top of the rig, which holds up the mainsail, gave way, causing the main to fall to the deck. After re-hoisting the sail on a kite halyard with one reef in, we got back underway, eventually completing the 119 nautical mile course in 8h 37m 55s, roughly 18 minutes ahead of the next monohull.

In the end 11 crews would retire, but boats and gear weren't the only thing to be broken. Simon Hull's ORMA60



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Wired

Photo: Will Calver

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Formula One



Photo: Will Calver

TeamVodafoneSailing pipped its own course record with a time of 5h 41m 44s, just three minutes quicker than last year.

"It's always nice to get a record, even though we only shaved a couple of minutes off the old time," says Hull. "It was quite a tricky day because the breeze was so up and down, it was really quite a turbulent day. It was 20 knots, gusting 40 knots, and in a multi you don't have an option but to set yourself up for the big puffs so you can survive those or you'll look pretty silly.

"I think if we are going to set a really fast time we are going to need less wind but much more consistent pressure. You have to slow the boat down to change gears, and that can cost you a lot of time."

Borderline set the first official record for the rapidly-growing 8.5-metre multihull class with a time of 8h, 59m 59s. However, this

is not the fastest time by a boat in the 8.5 division with *Attitude* holding the unofficial 8.5 record.

"Nine hours is still a pretty good run," *Borderline* crewman Kevin Peet said. "But it's definitely beatable. I think if we hadn't got held up by the sea state near Bream Bay we would have come pretty close to *Attitude's* time of about eight hours 20 minutes from a few years ago."

The 10.66-metre Elliot 35 *Super Sport Crusader* put in an extremely impressive performance in her first big race. It smashed not only the record for its division, monohulls under 10.66 metres, but for monohulls under 12.19 metres as well. Look out for a review of *Crusader* next month. And my review next year's Coastal Classic. Never is a long time after all.

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Coastal Classic records

Monohull

Overall

Alfa Romeo (2009) 6h 43m 32s

Under 12.19m

Crusader (2012) 10h 2m 51s

Under 10.66m

Crusader (2012) 10h 2m 51s

Under 9.14m

Overload (2009) 10h 23m 56s

Multihull

Over 10.66m

TeamVodafoneSailing (2012) 5h 41 44s

Under 10.66m

Frantic Drift (2009) 7h 58m 35s

2012 Winners

Division 1

Line V5 8h 37m 55s

PHRF Bare Essentials 9h 53m 34s

Division 2

Line Nosaka 12h 57m 23s

PHRF Whitebait 11h 3m 19s

Division 3

Line Peppermint Planet 15h 10s

PHRF Shrek's House 11h 52m

Division 4

Line Drop Dead Fred 15h 49m 22s

PHRF The Entertainer 12h 4m 52s

Division 5

Line Pelagian II 15h 25 m 19s

PHRF Pelagain II 11h 15m 28s

(Multihulls over 10.66m)

Division 6

Line TeamVodafoneSailing 5h 41m 44

PHRF Pzazz 6h 48m 57s

(Multihulls under 10.66m)

Division 7

Line Timberwolf 8h 44m 46s

PHRF FusionX 9h 57m 14s

Division 8

Line Devana 16h 1m 51s

PHRF Devana 12h 59m 5s

TeamVodafoneSailing
off Cape Brett



Photo Dean Wright