

2018 Mid Continent Regatta at Carlyle Sailing Association  
By Matt Burridge Yeti - 14834

This event could be called “head to the light” because it required fantastic race management to get 4 races in light and variable conditions as a high pressure took command of the Midwest over Memorial Day weekend. It was the lightest air with successful races I’ve seen in many years but it was still fun and challenging racing. I drank 4 lbs. of water while losing 2 lbs. net; staying hydrated was important.

We had a small but very competitive fleet that included 2 boats from Thunder Bay, Ontario 15 hours’ drive away with Richard Walsh and Brian Cox visited from the distant north. Richard Walsh’s 12 year old daughter Monica wanted to come because it was warm, she got her wish, and it was over 90°F all weekend.

For me it was a very special treat as my son Tim (19) had started sailing with Patrick (22) and me over the past 2 years but this was to be his first regatta. For those of you who don’t know us let me simplify; we are not destined to be a legendary heavy air team due to our enormous physical sizes, so a regatta in < 6mph was not especially daunting for us. The challenge was to be coordinated enough to roll tack and master smooth boat handling required to navigate in near drifting conditions. Patrick’s experience in the bow was an enormous asset as at times all competitors struggled to maintain steerage.

In race #1 the wind was on the right side of the beat but the course was set so that the right corner was in a shallows where I had never sailed since first launching on Carlyle Lake 46 years ago. As a consequence we were wary and stayed out of the shallows but Richard Walsh, Ian Moriarty and Arthur Merdinian ventured in and reaped huge gains before two of them ran aground, cleared and basically restarted. We trailed and lost another place before recovering to sail more heeled and therefore feeling confident to test the right. We finished 3<sup>rd</sup> with Walsh running away with it by a very big margin. Humbled and respectful of the fast Canadians we vowed to keep our eyes out of the boat in the next race!

Lunch and a lot of hydration followed and then a long sweaty slog for race #2 had Team Yeti winning with Walsh in 2<sup>nd</sup>. Finally sensing we’d suffered enough the course was shortened for race #3 while the wind freshened to almost 7. The third race had a very big gap from #2 to #3 with us, Walsh and Paoli finishing in that order. The runs were more fun with more breeze and more obtuse gybing angles but it was still a big game of connecting the dots and streaks of wind. In race #4 the wind was light but pleasant and Walsh led all the way around with a telescoping margin, at once huge then narrowed by big shifts and leverage upwind. At the final windward mark a big leftie got us back in the game (trailing by a boat length) for a long run to the finish.

We could not know this was the final race of the series and therefore this last run to the finish would decide the regatta. Half of the way down the run Walsh had control with a 2 boat length advantage as wind bounced between broad reaching and dead running in 5-6 mph of wind. He was solidly in control.

This situation held until the final 100 yards when Walsh’s wind seemingly slackens slightly just as a motorboat wake causing some bouncing. At that moment we squared the pole, pulled the board all the way up and greased our way to a one boat length lead and 2 lengths to leeward before the wake hit us too. About 60 yards from the finish Richard gybed to port crossing behind us to head to the favored committee boat end of the line. As a result we were able to remain on starboard and heat up to gain speed towards the pin then squared off to take the gun and regatta. We were elated at the sudden reversal of fortune and next day showed less wind in a dying pattern when all racing was called off.

Final standings were Yeti 5pts, Walsh 7pts with Paoli and Medinian tied at 17 pts, Gerry Paoli winning the tie breaker.

Tim Burridge had been on the winning team in his first regatta and didn’t get thrown in the lake! We’d come a long way as a team in our preparations for the San Diego NAs, a venue we’ve always enjoyed. We hope to see you there!

