



# FLUKY TRADES SLOW MAUI RACE

Navigating around the North Pacific high is once again key in the Vic-Maui International Yacht Race



The July 3 start off Victoria. *Blue Moves II* was racing to raise awareness of multiple sclerosis.

*Blue Moves II*, a Beneteau 393 sailed by Marke Thompson out of West Vancouver, opted to sail the rhumb line (shortest route), reducing the distance sailed by about 500 miles. This was Vlad Pavlic's strategy when he won the race in 1980, and it seemed that it might pay off again. *Blue Moves II* led the Division 3 fleet for nine days—including a morning spent swimming when they were becalmed for six hours on Day 7. But in the end, conventional wisdom won out. After being becalmed for two days and facing four more windless days, Thompson withdrew on Day 12.

In Division 1, *Renegade*, an Andrews 70 from Vancouver that took line honours in 1998 and 2004, had to withdraw due to steering problems shortly after leaving Victoria, while *Cassiopeia*, a Davidson 72 from Anacortes, Wash. withdrew after losing the top third of her mast—the same problem that caused her to withdraw from the Van Isle 360 last summer.

As *Voodoo Child* neared Hawaii, Duchin reported that the weather information was not helpful. "When in doubt, sail towards the finish," he wrote. This paid off as *Voodoo Child* went on to beat out *Horizon*, a Santa Cruz 50, for line honours, finishing in 12 days, one hour, 38 minutes and 55 seconds—a little more than three days longer than the record held by the Santa Cruz 70 *Grand Illusion* in 2000. *Voodoo Child* won both her division and the race on corrected time.

The seven yachts in Division 2, which were between 37 and 47 feet, were constantly changing places throughout the race. Any hopes of winning on corrected time were dashed when the

**R**acing to Maui is all about the North Pacific high—that vast, oscillating high-pressure area that, in the summer, sits right on the direct route between Victoria and Maui. Every year, after clearing Juan de Fuca Strait, navigators must make vital routing decisions. Get too close to the high, and the winds go light. Go too far south around it, and the boat sails too long a distance. The winner is often the boat that plays the route just right.

It was no different this year on the 20th anniversary of the race. After beating out of Juan de Fuca Strait in a brisk breeze, navigators on 17 yachts ranging in size from 35 to 72 feet had to make those vital decisions.

Brian Duchin, skipper of the Santa Cruz 52 *Voodoo Child* from Tacoma, Wash. used a program called Saildoc to

access a host of weather files. "A good part of navigating is downloading grib files that give us a prediction of wind speed and direction," he wrote in his log. "I load these into our performance racing software that generates a route based on our boat's performance polars."

While all yachts have sophisticated navigational and weather aides, it's ultimately human interpretation that counts. Most skippers turned south, staying close to the U.S. coast as far south as San Francisco before turning west for what was expected to be a trade-wind sleigh ride to Maui. But the race tracker (at [www.fistracking.com/vic/2006/](http://www.fistracking.com/vic/2006/)) shows that courses diverged over 500 miles between the 15 more conservative yachts, while over 1,000 miles separated the courses of the two extreme yachts.



Top (left to right): After sailing 3,000 miles, *Turicum*, *Kahuna* and *Tripp Tease* finished within two minutes of each other.

Left: *Voodoo Child* beating out of Juan de Fuca Strait.

Above: The crew of *Voodoo Child* celebrating their win with the traditional swim in Lahaina Harbour.

winds dropped unexpectedly as the leaders neared Maui. Doug Fryer, sailing his Perry 43, *Night Runner*, in his 11th Vic-Maui, took line honours, arriving almost five days after *Voodoo Child*. After racing over 3,000 miles, *Tripp Tease*, a Tripp 40 out of Comox that finished second, beat *Kahuna*, an Express 37 from Tacoma, by 13 seconds. Two minutes and 13 seconds

later *Turicum*, a C&C 44 from Vancouver, crossed the finish line. *Kahuna* won the division on corrected time.

Food was prominent in many yachts' logs. On Day 10, *Kahuna* caught a tuna and Ken Marks cooked the steaks "marinated in red wine, garlic and ginger and rolled in sesame seeds, and served them up with a strawberry jam

reduction of the marinade, curried rice, wasabi, pickled ginger and soya sauce." Most other meals reported were considerably more mundane.

The poor wind at the end of the race spelled trouble for Division 3 boats, except *Passepartout*, a Stephens 47 from Anacortes. She was the only boat in the division to finish, taking third place in the race on corrected time. Four other yachts withdrew, while *Norena of Wight*, a Clark 43 sailed by Joel Morassutti from Vancouver, failed to finish within the time limit of 18 days. *Norena* was the oldest boat in the race and one of the four yachts that raced in the first Vic-Maui in 1965.

For more information and complete results, see [www.vicmaui.org/2006](http://www.vicmaui.org/2006). 🌐