

Jolly Yellow Giant's

Hot Lemon V Breaks Southern

A 10 hour Autumn jaunt around the Channel Islands... all of them (plus a few more!)

A gentle 550NM jaunt around the Channel Islands... NOT !

A gentle 550NM jaunt around the Southern Islands... NOT !

The Southern Islands World Record course is 535 NM and encompasses the Isle of Wight, Alderney, Guernsey, Jersey and the Isles of Scilly. Mike & Dave Deacon found that a relatively short endurance run can be even more stressful and eventful than longer runs.

I've been told that a gentle cruise, drifting slowly past Alderney and Jersey, possibly dropping into Guernsey along the way, is an ideal way to spend the best part of a week or so during mid summer. Unfortunately for me, I don't appear to have a 'slow' button and as soon as I learned that Matthew Sillifant and John Connor had set a time of 20 hrs 32 mins for the new Southern Islands World Record course, I thought "that sounds like a fun trip" and set about planning an attempt with Dave and the (2nd favourite) lady of our lives, *Hot Lemon*.

Whilst planning our attempt in the balmy days of hot summer it seemed so easy... we just needed to drop in our middle sized deck tank which holds 500 litres of the red stuff, top up our main tanks which hold a total of 900 litres, add some water and sarnies and gently cruise off around the course...if only!

By late August, the inconvenient things such as family holidays and RIB racing were out of the way, so I dug out the preparation notes made for our earlier Round Britain Record runs and suffered a nasty reality shock. My stress levels climbed rapidly as I saw that these notes totalled almost one hundred items and even though this trip would only be some 535NM, as against our previous Round Britain circuits of



Hot Lemon arrives home

1365NM, I had learned never, ever, to be complacent when planning these attempts... Neptune bites!

The list was daunting and dependency had to be fought back... we had to complete the detailed RYA/UIM entry forms, have *Hot Lemon* officially measured and scrutineered, service our twin 320hp Yanmar diesels, work out and enter the waypoints, have the compass re-swung and prepare written notes as a back up, complete a detailed Passage Plan for approval and circulation to all Coastguard areas, track the weather patterns twice a day looking a week in advance plus attend to dozens of extra items. The weather is by far the biggest enemy of these Record attempts and a smooth, sunny Solent often disguises a two metre breaking swell at the Isles of Scilly. By mid October, panic was setting in; it was becoming clear that other teams were circling and if we didn't find a weather window soon, we would either have to run in darkness, which would slow us down very considerably, or abandon until next year and thereby leave the door wide open for a faster challenger.

It's now 1st November, no weather window and...disaster strikes. Loud rumbling from the port outdrive leg, gearbox has failed and, even more disastrous, a 24 hr weather window is appearing on 4th November. Dave Crawford Marine do their usual fantastic stuff and melt their telephone. However, "There's a problem, Mike, gearbox parts won't reach us for one or two days and we then have to strip the leg, re-build and run it in. Furthermore, there doesn't seem to be a spare leg in the UK, the closest one is in Europe".

Stress or what! Salvation appears in the form of BIBOA Vice Commodore Chris Strickland, the Round British Isles and London-Monte Carlo World Record holder: "I have a spare leg, take it". Chris, I OWE you!

On Saturday 4th November I call Dave, he abandons a great Guy Fawkes social weekend and jumps on a train from London. We're up until midnight making last minute calls and faxes to all relevant Coastguards and this time I've managed to avoid the usual stress-induced technicolour yawn I suffer immediately before setting to sea on these attempts. I think I'm kidding myself that this shorter course will be easier...wrong!



Mike and Dave

We broke the ice off *Hot Lemon* in the foggy darkness at 05.15 Sunday morning 5th November (why do we do this?) and followed the 05.30 Yarmouth ferry down river. The mist was slowly thinning as the sun rose and we were mighty relieved to make contact with BIBOA RIB racer Jonathan Hullock who had cycled some two miles from home to time us off from the Jack in the Basket platform at 06.24...thanks Jonathan, much appreciated. We expected mist in the Solent and we had it... visibility 75-100 metres which kept our speed down to 35 knots whilst running on radar. We reported in to Solent Coastguard and they were interested to receive our 'mist reports' until we cleared Bembridge in bright sunshine.

As an aside, I must thank all the Coastguards who spoke with us by telephone and VHF (Solent, St Peter Port, Jersey, Falmouth, Brixham and Portland); they were all most friendly, helpful and interested and it was good to know they were there.

Safely through Alderney Race 1 hr 50 mins after starting, I lean forward to tackle a sandwich and **BANG**, my forehead connects with the console as *Hot Lemon* gives a playful twitch; I see stars and plenty of blood, Dave tells me not to be such a wimp and we press on. We pass St Helier on the southern tip of Jersey 55 minutes thereafter, having run through the narrow and rocky Violet Passage at 55 knots in flat seas and bright sunshine. We then face the longest leg of 185 NM across the Western Approaches to Bishop Rock lighthouse on the south west corner of the Isles of Scilly which we complete in 3 hrs 25 mins. At Bishop we've run 325 NM in 6 hrs 10 mins but we now enter swell which reduces speed to 45 knots. The blood has cleared from my eyes but I have a golf ball sized lump on my forehead which Dave thinks is quite fetching. I get the last laugh as he is caught off balance in the swell, stumbles and sprains a knee...one all!

Suddenly, we each feel a strong vibration and hear a rumbling at the stern; although the Isles of Scilly are delightful, we're unlikely to be able to fix a broken gearbox at mid-day on a Sunday... gutted. We reduce speed and run in the swell at 30 knots towards Lands End. We don't want to stop in case the problem stops us from getting back up on the plane. We lift the legs in case we've caught a rope and the vibration drops away, we're soon back to 60 knots. Chris Strickland and scrutineer Rob Beakhust later instantly recognise this as an harmonic vibration common to these legs. It would have been good to know that at the time!

The run across the south coast was fairly uneventful in flat seas and brilliant sunshine. We receive friendly encouragement from Coastguards as we report our locations and we break open the biscuits for tea. Having lost time at the Scillies, we were now anxious to finish just under our target time of 10 hours but our plotter ETA was showing we would miss it by 5 minutes or so. We were wary of the vibration and rumbling starting again so kept speed below 60 knots. I was also mindful that we were draining fuel at a fair rate and it wouldn't be good to run out at the Needles. Nevertheless, Fortune favours the Bold (or the Brainless) and

we eased speed up to 65 knots. We were now at Old Harry Rocks and indicated to finish 2 minutes under our 10 hour target. Fuel was showing a steady red diode plus a flashing green...nothing was said. Jonathan called us as we passed through Hurst, "Beware of the water skier at the finish line", thanks Jonathan, a good call. We crossed the line, running on fresh air at 65 knots, in a time (subject to official confirmation) of 9 hours 56 minutes 24 seconds...job done.

We are met by Chris and Helen Strickland in *Seahound* plus another RIB with George from *Scorpion* and friends. From a distance of 10 metres Helen shouts, "What on earth is that lump on your head?" I reply, "It's a golf ball". The result was that we averaged 54 knots over a total non-stop running distance of some 540 NM in under 10 hours. I filled the tanks the next day and we'd used 1100 litres: we had useable fuel left for only 25 NM. Phew!

Mike Deacon
Hot Lemon V

Photos courtesy of
Mike Deacon



Scorpion MD Graham Jelly helpfully points out Mike's golf ball sized bruise