

IT WAS 'ANOTHER TIME' IN GOZO

Constantly changing conditions and close racing added miles of excitement to the IIG Autumn Gozo Regatta, says **Martin Meachen**, crew member of the *Otra Vez*.



The infamously scary Grigale windy and wet forecast did not deter the 12 yachts that lined up for starters orders one Friday afternoon for the Autumn Gozo Regatta, organised by the Royal Malta Yacht Club and sponsored by IIG Bank.

The Force 6 Grigale forecast never materialised - still, a remnant heavy swell with a gusty 20-knot Easterly breeze greeted the fleet in the mouth of M'Xett Harbour for an exciting start.

The cruiser fleet led the assault with *Amica*, comfortably in its element, leading the way to secure its first bullet of the weekend. Our very own Commodore, who was just as comfortable in his element, followed, behind the wheel of the RMYC's latest hot arrival, *Otra Vez*, fresh from its remarkable third overall placing in the Rolex Middle Sea Race, and firing on all fours to secure its first bullet.

It was a fast, full on race with shoots up for the latter half as the breeze backed, in difficult conditions, especially for the trimmers and grinders. David Attenborough would have been proud to capture the rare moment of Captain Bligh's gestures.

The boys on *Moondance*, with some older red skin help, claimed their first bullet in IRC 2. The urgency with which the boats rushed to Mgarr harbour may have been the result of the ever popular "Happy Hour" at Gleneagles, which had to be postponed to a later hour due the adventures of *Harry*, which fouled a trailing *Guy* in its prop and caught no joy.

On the second day, again the strong SE breeze forecasted never came, but we were blessed with ideal racing conditions, with the cruisers getting around Comino and the racers having a dash of fish farms in the mix. Very close racing ensued, with *Juno* opting for a short-cut - this caused frenzy on board *Otra Vez* and *Elusive 2* as they desperately searched for something red to fly in protest. I leave it to your imagination to wonder what was actually flown, but a good source indicated that the Commodore raced commando in the third race, with *Otra Vez*, *Moondance* and *DU4* sharing the spoils in their respective classes.

In order to play by the book, the bridge opted to shorten the course for the third race to satisfy time limits, which nearly discounted the second race

with five seconds to spare.

Some more close racing ensued with *Juno*, *Harry* and *Amica* dominating their class. Then, as black clouds loomed, it was a rush back to the Mgarr marina to tie up and watch the footie as the skies opened up in a deluge.

On the third day, it was all up for grabs in all three classes. A fickle breeze was to determine the outcome as crews battled the ever-changing wind strength and direction in the very flukey conditions. Boats parked as others passed by, to apparent anguish, with Jonathan on *DU4* threatening hara-kiri and screaming "Why me?" as *Otra Vez* drifted past with all its crew sporting menacing grins.

Otra Vez was to repeat this phenomenon, this time in M'Xett harbour just metres from the finish, at the expense of Mr Podesta, who was not amused. However, *Elusive 2* recovered to claim the line as *Otra Vez* opted to ram what's left of the club pontoons.

Otra Vez claimed its third bullet, winning the IRC 1 racing class, while *Moondance* claimed its third bullet and secured the IRC 2 class. *Amica* crossed the line as the sun set

in the west but its two bullets and a second secured the cruiser class nonetheless.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable weekend with a mixture of conditions and very close racing. The prize giving was held just after the conclusion of the fourth race at the club, where the trophies and other generous prizes were presented to the class winners by representatives of IIG Bank, sponsors of this years IIG Autumn Gozo Regatta. 

Full results

IRC Class 1

First - Otra Vez

Second - Juno

IRC Class 2

First - Moondance

Second - Harry

Cruiser Class

First - Amica

Second - DU4

Third - Misty Blue