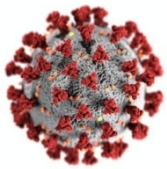
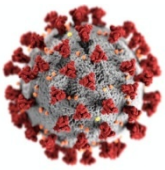
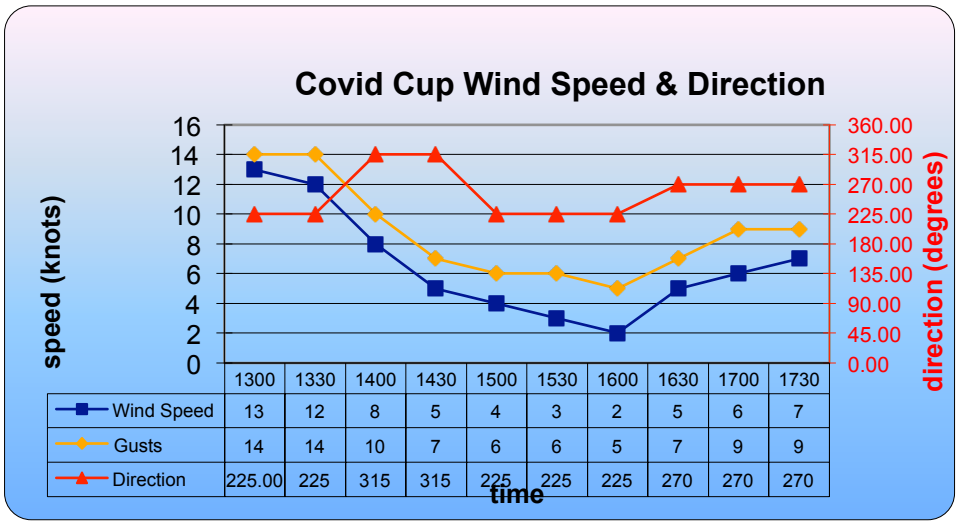


A Race Beyond Your Wildest Dreams
Inaugural 2021 Covid Cup Virtual Race 22 Sep 2021
Sponsored by Mercedes Benz Brighton



The day of the race was always going to be unreal when it began with an unpredicted earthquake. Hopes and expectations of the inaugural Covid Cup were high well before it started. The lack of on water activity during what would normally be the Wednesday Wonders Winter Series meant sailing had become something to dream about. It was not surprising that the Cup attracted a large fleet of 42 keelboats all with keen and eager crews who couldn't wait to get back out there. In addition, there were 6 spectator yachts in the bay taking a close look at the competitors. (Unfortunately SECOND NATURE was undergoing essential maintenance in the yard and was unable to join the fleet.) Four of the entrants had recently returned from Queensland via New South Wales. They were required to undergo 14 days quarantine at Outer Anchorage with the boats receiving a deep clean before they could race. Necessary victuals were supplied daily and even the successive heavy squalls they experienced failed to dampen their enthusiasm. They desperately searched the net for the onshore press conferences only to decide they were better off were they were.

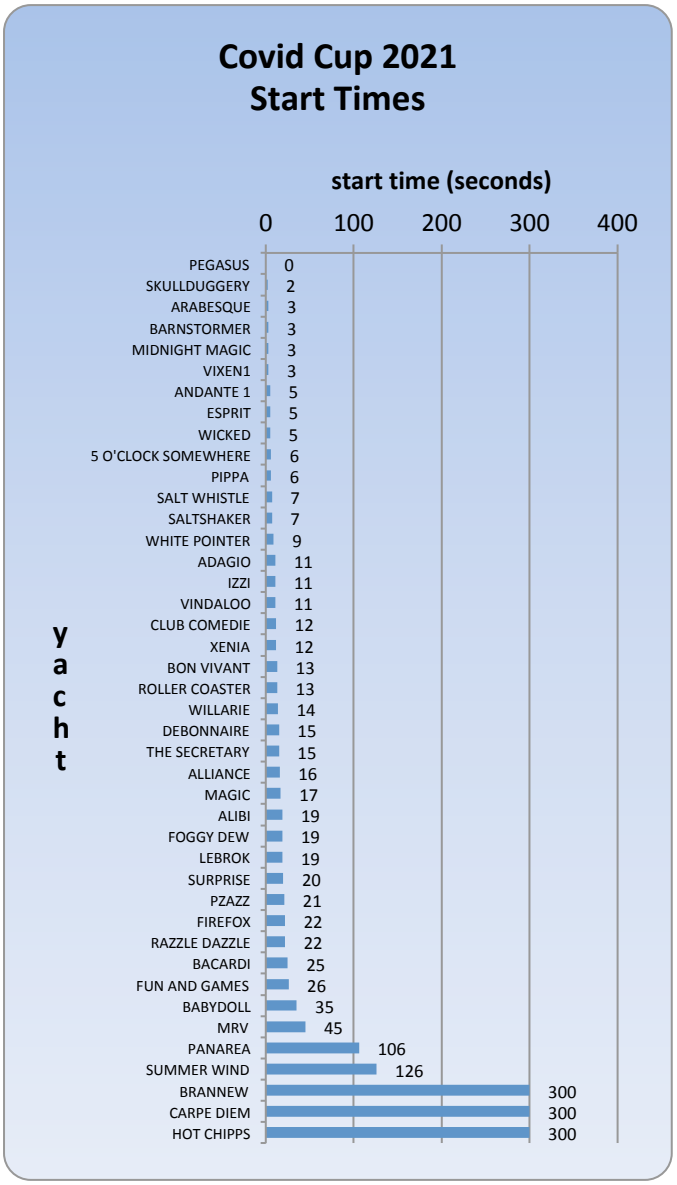


	1300	1330	1400	1430	1500	1530	1600	1630	1700	1730
Wind Speed	13	12	8	5	4	3	2	5	6	7
Gusts	14	14	10	7	6	6	5	7	9	9
Direction	225.00	225	315	315	225	225	225	270	270	270

Emotions reached fever pitch when skippers and crew read the handicaps posted on the Wailing Wall at the Ken King Centre. Common decency prevents publication of the actual comments except to say their own handicaps were way too high whilst those of competitors were way too low.

Despite handicap concerns the race produced a tight finish with more than half the fleet finishing within 10 minutes of the winner.

The race for the coveted trophy was around the 7 leg course 29 in what became challenging conditions. The race began in good conditions but deteriorated. A steady westerly had been blowing since the weekend which kept the yachts hobby horsing about in the chop. Most yachts successfully navigated what was to become a shortened course as the wind eased and fog decended reducing visibility. The low mournful wail of foghorns could be heard in the distance. Fortunately there was a patch of clear air near the finish line large enough for the fleet to be seen from the tower as they finished the race. However, by 5 past 4 the fog rolled back in making it impossible for the tower to record the finish times of yachts finishing after that time. The matter is under investigation by the committee. There was plenty of action out on the water during the race with CLUB COMEDIE running aground and two protests raised as a result of other extraordinary incidents. Rumour has it that THE SECRETARY, who made a good start to the race, took off in search of Gilligan's Island due to the poor visibility in the fog and turned up at Royal Brighton two days later!



Despite patrolling the start line before the race SKULLDUGGERY could only manage the second best start of the day as she watched PEGASUS make a flying start as she crossed the line exactly on time. In their eagerness to get going 4 yachts started 1 second too soon and received a 5 minute penalty. This proved costly in a race with a tight finish.

(Left) The skipper and crew of WILLARIE were both surprised and delighted to be the winner of the inaugural Covid Cup. She was the second to cross the start line and the first to finish. It was a challenging race but the response by the boat and crew far exceeded any expectations. There were tense moments on board when wind dropped but some skilful helming and sail adjustment helped keep the yacht going forward.

(Below) WHITE POINTER was never far from the lead in this race and was narrowly beaten at the finish but still had plenty to celebrate. Those onboard had been inspired by Australia's achievements in both the Olympic and Para Olympic Games. It was a great result for a yacht that is best suited to stronger breezes.

The Welsh yacht, WICKED, put in a top shelf performance to finish in 3rd place. She started from well back in the fleet and improved her position on the completion of each leg of the race. If the race had continued for just one more leg WICKED could have been the winner of the coveted prize.

(Left) Some skippers & crew dressed for style, fashion & elegance (?) whilst others (above) choose the more functional PPE

(Below left) Tommy "The Tipster" Raft – by the end of the day he needed both hands to lift the bag

(Right) MIDNIGHT MAGIC conjured up a good result in this one

The SYC rescue boat (above) had a busy day with CLUB COMEDIE (right) an early customer

There's FOGGY DEW (left) then there's FOGGY DEW (right)

(Right) VIXEN 1 was always in the hunt

(Above) ARABESQUE danced around the course
(Right) PIPPA was an early leader

(Left) BACARDI got into the spirit of the race

(Left) Spectators in the members straining to spot the fleet through the fog as SKULLDUGGERY (above) emerges

Most photos by
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