

Mackinac Race History 2000 - 2003

A New Course and Lightning Strikes Twice

"On the way to the 85th sailing"

The new millennium brought in a new Mackinac race course and a "Super Mac" to help celebrate it. The newly constructed Southampton buoy off the northern tip of the Bruce Peninsula, Ontario added a different challenge for the racers. Placed after the removal of the old Cove Island buoy by the Canadian government, it offered a shorter leg to the mark and a longer second leg to Mackinac Island course for a total of 291 miles. To celebrate the year 2000, a second race was added that would have the competitors cross the finish line at the island and continue on to Chicago to complete the Millennium 600. With the exception of the GL70s all the monohulls were racing under the PHRF handicap system.

The 76th 2000 Port Huron to Mackinac race was a fast race with lots of wind. Much of it had headwinds that made it an athletic race for crews. Two sailboats withdrew with crucial breakdowns in the first 24 hours of racing. *Footloose*, a 34-footer in Class G, lost its mast about 7 p.m. Saturday and motored back to Port Huron. The 40-foot *An Ghaoth Ag Do Chuln* in cruising Class A broke a shroud and motored to Lexington. The 60-foot multihull *Earth Voyager* was the first boat to round the new turning mark on the Southampton course at 3:36 a.m. Sunday, less than 24 hours after its start. The first Great Lakes 70 was *Renegade* at 4:50 a.m. followed by *Pied Piper* at 4:54. The entire class rounded by 6:47 a.m.

Saturday's headwinds and three-to-four-foot waves tended to strain rigs and likely contributed to the accidents that caused the two boats to drop out. Those conditions also taxed the crews. As rough as it was on Sunday for most racers, Monday night was rougher. No one knew that better than the crew of *Eagle Driver*, which finished the race at 8:31 a.m. Tuesday, earning the distinction of being the race's last, or "pickle" boat. "Everyone was relieved when we finished," skipper Tom Yost of Clio said. "It was beginning to be about survival out there. It was pretty nasty." *Eagle Dancer* and her crew faced much stronger winds on Monday night, thanks to a cold front that blew through Mackinac Island around 4 p.m. *Eagle Dancer*, which had spent Sunday night and a good part of Monday becalmed near Goderich, Ont., went to the Michigan shore after rounding the Southampton Buoy in search of wind. They found it, and then some. "We made a beeline to the Michigan shore, to take advantage of those southwest breezes in the weather report," Yost said. "We hoped we would get there in time, but those breezes never showed." Instead, the wind came howling in out of the north, gusting as high as 37 knots, with waves as high as six feet, beating on the boat and its crew. To avoid the storm, Yost went to the north end of the lake, to the Les Chenaux Islands off the Upper Peninsula. *Eagle Dancer* then moved slowly along as its crew recovered while fixing storm-related damage. "We had to get well, and to get warm, before we could continue," Yost said. That accomplished, *Eagle Dancer* finally made it across the finish line. It was one of three boats to finish Tuesday, nearly 6 1/2 hours behind Hurricane. Another great story was the J-120 annual battle between Jim Tepel's *Big Kahuna* and Bob Kirkman's *Hot Ticket*. In 1997, 1998, and 1999 1st place *Big Kahuna* had beaten 2nd place *Hot Ticket*. Although *Ticket* had sailed some pretty good races, she could not tie down 1st. This year it seemed like it was going to be a repeat, but about a mile out as they were in a tacking duel, *Big Kahuna* ripped her headsail, allowing *Hot Ticket* to pass her and win by 3 minutes. Frank Kerwin, a *Ticket* regular crewman, had just passed away and the crew swore he had sliced *Kahuna's* sails for the victory. The party marked the end of a race with steady and sometimes high winds, a race that finished nearly 24 hours earlier than the 1999 version. A total of 19 boats withdrew, most due to mechanical failure. "Nineteen boats was a lot (of withdrawals)," Race Chairman Peter Griffin said. "It was a rough race for a lot of boats this year. Usually, only one or two boats have to withdraw, so 19 is definitely a big number." In all, 260 of the 264 boats in the race finished on Monday. "This was a tough class," Winfield Cooper III, winner of cruising A said. "We had six division leaders from last year in it. But (*Chippewa*) sailed very well." *Pied Piper* was the first monohull to Mackinac Island, was the first to finish to Chicago also. It won the GL70 Class. Those boats that did continue on in the Super Mac were rewarded with a northeast heavy wind that provided a fast downhill sleigh ride. A total of 38 boats participated in the Millennium 600. [Link for 2000 results.](#)

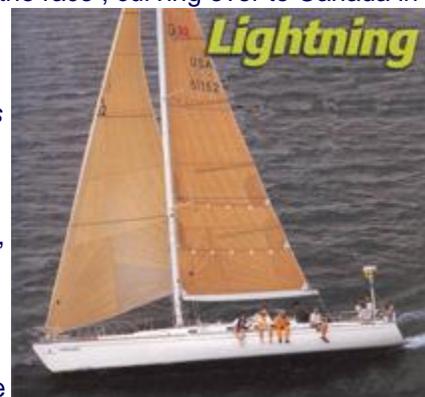


Mr Bills Wild Ride Won J35/T35 Class in 2000

The 2001 race was made famous by its famous winner. And unlike other media moguls or rock stars in past Mackinac races, Bob Seger was taking his turn on watch like all the other 3,000 sailors in the race. "We're awfully excited," said Seger who was racing his new Santa Cruz 52 whose previous best finish in the race was 29th." "We had a great crew, that's what did it." "Everybody took turns steering the boat, and he was in the rotation just like everybody else," said Mike Thompson of Detroit, who crewed aboard *Lightning*. Seger's boat, battled with *Tiki II*, a Corel 45. "We had an intense race between the two of us," Thompson said. "They were literally ahead of us several times, and we were fighting back and forth." *Lightning's* time corrected by handicap was 30 hours, 34 minutes and 42 seconds. *Tiki II* finished fifth in the class on corrected time. Seger's boat got its name because a previous boat was struck by lightning. *Decision*, an Andrews 70, was the first monohull to the island and would have edged *Lightning*, but lost a protest over a starting line collision. On the line with 24 boats in the big PHRF A class, *Decision* collided with *Insatiable*, a Nelson Marek 50. *Decision's* spinnaker pole crossed well over *Insatiable*, narrowly missing the bowman. *Decision* admitted it's fault, but the race committee disqualified *Decision*, based on a collision involving the possibility of great bodily harm, said Marcia Everingham, race chairwoman. In the Santa Cruz 70 class, the Chicago area boat *Holua* held up to take first place, beating *Colt 45*. *Nice Pair* edged *Earth Voyager* for first overall on corrected time in the multihull, class. *Earth Voyager* was first to the island in a little more than 24 hours, but on corrected time, the 38-foot *Nice Pair* beat the 60-foot *Earth Voyager* by 2:59. On the 235 mile shore course, *Cygnus*, a C&C 35, won the overall title. And in cruising Class A, *Grizzly* took the overall victory. *Grizzly* was owned by Charles Bayer Sr., who was sailing his 55th consecutive Bayview Mackinac. *Yare*, a historic favorite, took first in Cruising B. One poignant memory was aboard *Earth Voyager*. The crew stenciled the name Hornett on its giant mast, just above the boom, sending a powerful statement to all sailors who challenge the Great Lakes. [Link for 2001 Results](#)



In 2002 *Lightning* struck twice in the Bayview Mackinac race, as Bob Seger and his crew won PHRF A for the second consecutive year and as a bonus, took home top honors overall beating Jim and Paul Kraft's *Power Tripp*. The 78th annual race started slowly, with a high pressure system parked over Lake Huron. But as the system moved over Ontario, winds picked up, reaching as much as 20 knots Sunday night. In the end, it wasn't a fast Mackinac, but the boats finished at their usual Monday times. There were 244 sailboats in the race with more than half of the field finishing by early Monday night. Seger said his crew was again the difference this year in conditions that were much more difficult than the year before. *Lightning* arrived at Mackinac at 6:47 a.m. Monday. The wind was mild for most of the weekend. Crews had to work to find any breeze at all, unlike the previous year, when a good portion of the field arrived at Mackinac on Sunday. *Evolution* arrived at 1:33 a.m. and was followed by two other GL 70s, *Colt 45*, owned by Allan Fletcher, and *Stripes*, owned by Bill Martin. *Lightning* and other Southampton course boats that did well went up the Michigan shore in the early hours of the race, curving over to Canada in the early evening. After Southampton, *Lightning* sailed close to the rhumb line, said crew member Erik Chynoweth. "In 2000, when we did the first race, we went up the Canadian shore and we lost five hours," said Chynoweth, who added that Seger is one of *Lightning's* helmsmen and tacticians. "This year we stayed close to the Michigan shore and we made out big-time." There were several reports of boats running aground for brief periods, especially along the Canadian side of the Straits of Mackinac. *Promotion*, a Frers 50, was in contention for a flag in PHRF A but ran aground about two miles short of the end marker within sight of the finish. She was disqualified after the crew had to use the engine to refloat. Skipper Tim Schley said the disqualification stung, but it wasn't the end of the world. "It's easy to be a good winner," he said. "It's tougher to be a good loser." Some traditional celebrations took place once boats arrived at Mackinac Island. Dorsey Ruley of Chicago sailed his Sydney 41 *Majic* to a likely second-place finish in PHRF B, despite having to repair a mainsail torn in half Sunday night. Bob Moak, skipper of *Jewel*, huddled over a cellular phone at



the finish to give his 94-year-old mother, Alice, a special birthday gift. Moak had learned *Jewel* won the PHRF G-class race. "She couldn't believe it," Moak said after the call. He and his eight-member crew celebrated their 8:36 a.m. finish with a cold beer each, after a race bedeviled by light, variable winds that kept the progress slow. Starting before daybreak, hundreds of spectators, whose hopes for an early finish were dashed by Sunday's similar weather, lined the approaches to the harbor along the island's southeast side. Many went to Mission Point Resort, the race 's official headquarters, to gaze at bulletin boards and TV screens showing unofficial results as they were posted on the Internet. Family and friends of the crews aboard 242 participating yachts started arriving at Mackinac Harbor about 8 a.m., when large groups of boats began making their way across the finish line. Sarah Touma of Port Huron, whose husband, Doug, was a crew member aboard *Jewel*, waited dockside with Andrew, the couple's 11 month old son. When Mr. Touma briefly stepped ashore, he hugged his son, who reached for the dirty blue baseball cap atop his father's head. "No, Andrew, Daddy's nasty," Mr. Touma said. "He needs a shower." Because of the race 's slow speed, *Jewel*'s crew ran out of bottled water and had to drink from Lake Huron toward the end of the event, he said. "It really wasn't too bad," he said. This was the first year where race fans were able to go the Bayview Mackinac Race website and observe the rounding times. [Link for 2002 Results](#)



Evolution

But one word that was repeatedly uttered Monday, as the 2003 race wound down, was frustration. "Talking to people, it was just frustrating because of the up-and-down wind," Bayview Commodore Ted Everingham said. "There were storms that went through, but the winds weren't there, which is unusual. That made for a lot of sitting." Staying in one place in the water would be nice if there were time to lounge, but not in competitive sailing. "We ran into a couple of slow spots yesterday (Sunday) afternoon and evening," said Russ Nutter, who was aboard *Undaunted*. "That definitely made it so we weren't going as fast as we'd like. It's always frustrating when there's no wind, but sailing is like that. It's not always perfect. You have to handle it." *Undaunted* turned the buoy 5 miles off Southampton, Ontario, late Sunday, and Nutter said the boat's crew believed it could sail onto Mackinac at midnight Monday morning. But stuck in dead air, *Undaunted* didn't reach Mackinac until 9:15 a.m. One bright spot in this year's sailing was the success and enthusiasm that the Turbo Division, made up of the five biggest boats in the race, brought to the race. Taking the overall Shore Course victory and a 1st place white flag was the *Bantu*. "It's the pinnacle," said Larry Hilliard, *Bantu* crew member. The overall winner for the longer Southampton Course was *Equation*, which reached the island almost three hours after the *Alchemy*, but won by a little over two minutes after the handicap correction. *Equation* owner Bill Alcott said winning at something he loves never gets old. "It's a great feeling, and it's what we do," he said, moments after stepping off stage. *Equation* also took first in the new Turbo Class. The New York boat *Earth Voyager* took home the white flag in the Open Class after setting an elapsed-time record of just over 23 hours. Owner Ray Howe wasn't at the awards, but crew member J.R. Watson said this victory made all the repair work from December 2001's train accident worthwhile. "It's very rewarding we spent a lot of time and obviously, money," Watson said. [Link for 2003 Results](#)



Bill Alcott on the stern of Equation

In the end there had been a lot of controversy about rating systems and although PHRF was cheap and quick, there was a feeling among the racers that it was too political and perhaps there was a better way by using another handicap. By 2005 that decisions was made.