

PRESS RELEASE

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Kowloon Cup 2024

(For immediate release) Way back in 1966, three years after the establishment of the club, the committee held its first racing event – the Port Shelter Regatta. It attracted entries from Stanley, Little Sai Wan, Gordon Hard, Tai Po and the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club. It showed that sailing in Hong Kong's eastern waters provided an alternative to the confines of Victoria Harbour and, with the improvement of roads and infrastructure, easier access. Confident that there would be demand, the club's sailing committee organised another event the following year. Called the Kowloon Cup, it was presented by JC Howlett.

The event was well received but, perhaps because of timing, did not enjoy the same popularity as, for example, the Typhoon Series. Moth-balled for a number of years, it was resurrected on Saturday, the 20th of February 2010 with all eyes on the new, bright orange, Ker 11.3, *Minnie the Moocher*, then owned by Sandra Snell.

There was a call to make more of the event and a pursuit race was added on the Sunday. *Minnie* took line honours and 3rd on handicap. Ultimately, the Kowloon Cup was lifted by Cynthia Law and *RB* for a 2nd in Race 1 and a bullet in Race 2.

The event has continued intermittently and has held its numbers at around 20 boats, particularly for the first day of racing. In 2020, for example, 23 boats turned out to compete in HKPN. The addition of Yau Ley restaurant in Rocky Harbour as a prize-giving venue has made a difference – butterfly prawns and deep-fried squid are a great way to end a day's sailing.

This year, on Saturday, the 13th of January, the race management team held a briefing on board the committee boat, *Hebe One*, before heading out into Port Shelter to lay the start line for the club's first keelboat race of the year – Race 7 of the Kowloon Cup 2024. Race officer, Queenie Ho, said "with *Little Swallow* in mind, I intend to run a short course, say 10 to 13 nautical miles" and eventually decided on Course 41. No IRC division, only the relatively new PHS handicapping system. No windward mark.

Support boats had been sent ahead to confirm Force 4 outside Port Shelter. The RO was ably assisted by Lizzie Sharp on board and, out on the water, Lily Reid took care of the marks. The positioning of the ODM made for a short start line and the promise of excitement at the committee boat end.

And excitement there was. The faster boats spread out but the mid-fleet approached more tightly packed with the slower-moving *Little Swallow* closest to the committee boat. To leeward of *Little Swallow* came *Minnie the Moocher*, calling for water, with *X-Terminator* on the outside.

Little Swallow was trapped and collided with both *Minnie* and the committee boat. *Minnie* protested that *Little Swallow* to windward failed to give room at the line and avoid contact. The protest committee agreed and disqualified *Little Swallow* in Race 1.

The course took the fleet around Ma Tsai Pai, Bay Islet, Tai Tau Chau, Green Beacon to a finish off the southern tip of Sharp Island.

Down the back passage, past High Island Reservoir, boats hoisted their kites in the steady breeze, yet somewhat gloomy conditions. Fortunately, the breeze held and it wasn't long before the leaders – *Minnie the Moocher* and *Talkinghead* – were rounding Green Beacon and gliding down the home strait, past the mariculture zone and Kau Sai Chau ferry pier, to the finish.

Line honours went to Bridget Chan and *Minnie the Moocher*. 1st on handicap, though, was *Harpseal* followed by *No One Else* and *Orca*. Sadly, *Minnie* could only manage a 10th in the final rankings. Last boat to record a finish was *Jelik 7*.

Sunday's schedule was for a pursuit race with a prize-giving at Yau Ley. *Hebe One* laid anchor midway between the Hebe Haven channel and Whiskey Beach. Race officer of the day was Joseph Lau, with Queenie Ho as his assistant. The wind, sadly, was a very fickle 0-2 knots and the chosen Course 4 (down to Table and across to Bluff twice) is quite a challenge in light winds.

Little Swallow was the first boat away, struggling to get going but doing its best anyway! *Minnie the Moocher* was last off at 1104. By this time, the wind had improved for the faster boats and, at the entrance to Port Shelter, *Manbude* had passed three boats in what would be a good day for its crew.

Incidentally, *Minnie* got caught in a flat spot and only had 3 knots to start with. But, being a determined lot, the crew found some wind on the western side of Port Shelter and took off on a long reach to Silverstrand before tacking back towards Ma Tsai Pai, and giving *Manbude* a run for its money.

The RO set the Kowloon Cup mark, and another in front of Yau Ley, with a plan to have the boats complete laps ahead of a 1400 finish. However, it was decided to abandon the planned laps in front of Yau Ley in favour of a simple finish over the line, after rounding Bluff for the second time. In the end, *Manbude* stormed home with a full kite to take line honours at 14:04:10, in time for a late lunch. Lunch was even later for the rest of the fleet, with only 11 of the 17 finishers able to make it before the 1500 cut-off.

After being robbed of some wind at the start, *Minnie* just couldn't find its previous day's speed and came in 6th over the line. The crew then dropped sails and motored away, opting not to stay for the prize-giving.

As the sailors settled in, Paul C Arkwright, general manager of the Hebe Haven Yacht Club, who also raced in the event, announced the results to much applause from the crowd. He expressed his appreciation for everyone's support, to Voyage Club for their wine and to Carlsberg for sponsoring the much sought-after, ice-cold beer.

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About Hebe Haven Yacht Club

Hebe Haven Yacht Club is a private members club established in the Pak Sha Wan, Sai Kung area in 1963. The Club provides first-class yacht racing and boating facilities for members. The Club also works closely with local schools and organisations, to offer training facilities and professional instruction to develop youth sailing in Hong Kong. In addition, as a 'Caring Organisation' member, the Club proactively contributes to the local community with regularly organised events.

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