

St. Barth's Bucket 2007: Redeemed by the Weather Gods

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JORDAN MITCHNICK

IF AN ENTIRELY WIND-LESS 2006 REGATTA couldn't touch the spirit of the Bucket, I had faith that all would be well...eventually...even if I was faced with the possibility of reporting on the 2007 edition live from the glorious Ramada Inn in Charlotte, North Carolina. The large entourage of us who were stuck there foolishly had not learned our lessons and given ourselves an extra week to make it to St. Barths for the Bucket – including various members of the Race Committee and quite a few members of different race crews. So the notoriously lengthy journey to St. Barths from the U.S. began on a questionable note.

We kept our chins up throughout the afternoon's tedious process of rebookings. No boats, no water, no Ti-punch, no Jimmy Buffet sightings or Cheeseburgers in Paradise, and certainly no Skippers' meeting soirée aboard *Maltese Falcon*. We tried not to imagine how the event would go on without us.

So the fact that we actually made it was a grand enough surprise in itself – but as our misplaced group, awash in rum punch, coasted leisurely into Gustavia Harbour 30 hours late, the spectacle was more stunning than ever before. Masthead lights joining with constellations led us into the port, where 28 sailing superyachts awaited us. The action at the marquee was dying down, and surprisingly the evening was slightly calmer than usual (in Bucket terms) but we knew we would have many a chance to make up for it.

Friday's "Around the Island Race" began with a lovely 14-knot breeze out of the northeast – and as I had been receiving updates from weatherguru.com for about a month, I speculated it was only going to get better. I scoped my options out carefully and though it was a difficult choice – with the expected collection of the gorgeous "regular crowd", in addition to an enticing selection of new beauties including the unmistakable neon aqua-colored 104-foot *Gliss* from Royal Huisman/Briand. For obvious reasons, I jumped aboard 116-foot *Whisper*, unquestionably and consistently the most fun boat. Though the *Rebecca* crew may have deservedly won the "Cool



Gustavia, St. Barths

Crew" award, we could not have had a better time, while simultaneously beginning a formidable string of yachting photography days.

The evening's Yacht Hop was a great show – *Whisper's* Green Flash party with a fabulous local steel drum group was of course the finale and a segue into an increasingly musical evening – Jean Marc's Baz Bar was packed to the brim until the wee hours, an array of table-dancing sightings offering plenty to laugh about on Saturday.

The Wind Guru was indeed correct, as Saturday's breeze picked up a few notches for the "Wiggley Course". While I enjoyed a glorious day aboard the new 141-foot Holland Jachtbouw schooner *Skylge*, 108-foot *Avalon* ended up as winner – it was widely noted that the spirit of Tom Taylor just 'whoosh'-pushed *Avalon* past *Highland Breeze*, which had taken an honest lead, over the line to win. The Owner's Party at David's house and the crew party at the marquee were equally brilliant; the crew party making its way to the yacht club for a quintessentially insane YC evening.

Sunday morning, though rough for some, was a perfect Caribbean sailing day – 25 knots and bluebird, and of course that calls for rising to the occasion. "Around the Island Clockwise" was quick and glorious – spinnakers up for the run to the finish and in by about 2:30. With champagne flowing, local Jimmy Buffet made a surprise appearance – and then the lively prize giving began. Palmer Johnson/Chuck Paine's 118-foot *Kaori* and her magenta-clad crew were the winners overall. The marquee quickly cleared out, and off we went to dance the night away.

See you all in Newport! www.bucketregattas.com ★



Kokomo



Kaori – The Bucket's overall winner



Perseus and Rebecca



Racing smoothly aboard **Whisper**



Rebecca's cool crew

2007 ST BARTH'S AWARDS

Huisman Spirit of the Bucket

Sequell

Alloy Best Overall

Paraiso

Churchill Corinthian Cup – Seamanship

Rebecca

Perini Navi Best Overall

Maltese Falcon

Handicappers Cup

Metolious

Cool Crew

Rebecca

Escargot Cup

Parlay

Overall
1st **KAORI**
2nd **AVALON**
3rd **WINDCREST**

Grand Dames
1st **KAORI**
2nd **WINDCREST**
3rd **AVALON**

Gazelles
1st **SOJANA**
2nd **HIGHLAND BREEZE**
3rd **REBECCA**



Jimmy Buffet



Racing aboard **Skylge**