



Sam Talbot from the BVI blasts in front of the fleet

Gabriel Creque, also from the BVI, awaits the starting horn

Alain Montauzou from France and 16-year-old Stuart Jennings from the Cayman Islands sprint for the finish line



Andy Morrell (right) and event coordinator Simon Woods brief the racers on the course, a rough 22 miles of buoy-rounding from Trellis Bay to Deadman's Bay, Peter Island (shown below)



Brazilian Wilhelm Schuman dominated the regatta, placing first in each of the seven events.

My shipmates: Julian, Taylor, and Kode at the HIHO pirate party at the Last Resort, Trellis Bay



Boats + Boards

IN THE BVI



The annual HIHO takes a sailing novice to 11 islands in seven days

“Take your time, nice and slow,” said our captain every time anybody stepped on or off the dinghy, and it soon became the motto of *Bonac Witch*, a Moorings 4300 catamaran that served as one of the spectator boats for the 24th annual Highland

Spring HIHO Regatta in the British Virgin Islands. For my girlfriend, Taylor, and me, taking it nice and slow was exactly what we intended, but for the HIHO competitors, slow was nowhere on their agenda.

Since it began in 1979, the Highland Spring HIHO, short for Hook-In-Hold-On, has been bringing together sailing and windsurfing for an amazing summer week in the BVI. Windsurfers of all experience levels come seeking adventure; non-windsurfers come too, simply for the experience and a berth on a 4300.

Ten captained Moorings 4300s met

the racers and guests at The Moorings base in Road Town, Tortola. My girlfriend, Taylor, and I were assigned to *Bonac Witch*, a name that to this day I don't know the meaning of. Having never even slept on a boat and never sailed on a catamaran, I was a little concerned about committing to a full week, but after seeing the accommodations and meeting our boatmates, Julian from South Africa and Kode from New York, I chilled out.

We motored out to Saba Rock, opposite the Bitter End Yacht Club, on Virgin Gorda. This tiny island has a restaurant and gift shop, and after a brief orientation by Andy Morrell, who runs HIHO and is a world-class windsurfer himself, the party began with a huge buffet. When we heard that the entire fleet would meet up for a race briefing at 8:30 the next morning, Taylor and I cut our partying short.

After the race meetings each morning, we non-racers would sail to the finish line, always at a secluded beach, and enjoy lunch while waiting for the fleet to arrive. Spectators swam and lay in the sun, while the racers sailed their boards right up to the beach, then jumped off and ran to touch the finish mark, a flag placed in the sand. More than once, first place came down to a foot race.

The first race finished on Eustacia Island, in Eustacia Sound, and subsequent races took us to The Baths, Little Thatch, Peter Island, Norman Island, Sandy Spit, and more. We spent each night in a different cove and enjoyed dinners at local hotspots throughout the islands. The racecourses involved a mix of difficulty levels. The winds and conditions changed along with the terrain and location in the islands. For me, the second day was especially memorable. The race started near Saba Rock and ended 13 nautical miles away in Anegada. I was very impressed with the racers, who, standing on their boards, were not much taller than the swells as they looked for a flat island whose trees were the only objects in sight. After lunch on the white beaches, the competitive spirit kicked in and the cats raced to Leverick Bay, on Virgin Gorda (our boat won, through no fault of my own).

As spectators, Taylor and I had plenty of downtime, which we used to the fullest. We couldn't get enough of the warm, clear water and spent every minute we could snorkeling or just bobbing around, trying to cool off. I even tried windsurfing. I thought that, since I have pretty good balance and am a snowboarder, I'd

get the hang of it right off the bat. Turns out it's a little tougher than just keeping your balance on a board; you have to deal with that whole wind thing. The wind blew me all over the place, and Julian had to come out in the dinghy to rescue me when I was being blown downwind and could not tack back up. Exhausted after 20 minutes, I called it quits.

“This year seemed better than ever,” said Andy. “I think it's the dream of every windsurfer. It's 150 miles of fabulous windsurfing through the islands, and we were very lucky with the conditions.” The conditions sure seemed to be ideal for Brazilian pro windsurfer Wilhelm Schuman, who won each of the seven races and the event overall. Sixteen-year-old Cayman Islander Stuart Jennings gave Schuman and the rest of the competitors a run for their money, coming in sixth (the top ten racers represented ten different countries).

I had a better time than I'd imagined possible watching an event I started out knowing nothing about and sailing among islands I'd never visited before. ▲

25th Anniversary HIHO

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