



Lagunitas Kite Race Series
St. Francis Yacht Club
May 16th, 2013
Report by Felix Louis N'jai

One minute until class flag and gun, forty five seconds until P flag and gun, thirty seconds until P flag down and a long horn, fifteen seconds until class flag down and gun: five, four, three, two, one, BANG! The starting sequence, as Master of the watch Robbie Dean beckons the pageant of kites to the start line. A sight to truly behold as 28 sailors, 28 kites answer in unison.

Welcome to The Cathedral, the home of kiteboard course sailing, San Francisco bay, Thursday May 16th, 2013. With the sun and fog setting on the 700 foot spires that guard its gate, four to eight foot swells usher in the 2.49 knot flood, winds averaging 25 from the west with a little south for good measure, the bay promised another mystical evening of racing. The course this evening, F1, is a dry run for the North American Championship coming to the bay in two weeks. With this new layout, racers will clip the starting line just north of Last Chance Beach, then round the windward mark to port by Blackhailer Buoy for a long reach to a leeward gate, almost back to the the starting ribbon. Then back to windward for a second port rounding, downwind for a second reach to the mid course buoy just north of St Francis Yacht Club, and finally leave that to starboard for a finish between the race deck and the A buoy.

Taking two out of the three heats of the night, 2012 PKRA champion Bryan Lake, callsign Bernie was the winner. But the man in second stole the show. A regular fixture on the thursday night series, Joey Pasquali has made a deliberate move up the rankings, but was still looking for that elusive thursday night bullet.

BANG! Race one started all clear: Joey took the early lead, pinching slightly ahead of the fleet all on starboard tack. Except Bernie, who tries to steal port, a fatal error, as he had to cascade through the better part of the fleet. Joey's sizable advantage shrinks fast as Bernie barrels up on him at the windward

mark. Joey keeps his speed, but Bernie's speed in the Crissy monster chop is just unmatched. This contributes to his undoing just after rounding windward. When a four foot roller catches the nose of his board and daylights, Bernie goes down. There is nothing he can do. Steady as she goes, Joey picks up the slack and never looks back. Back on his board, Bernie gives chase. Joey's lead is wide but not daunting, and Bernie slowly makes ground. Joey is not going to be denied, not this day. He protects his lead as a hunted man should, taking every chop and wake in deliberate stride as he blazes toward the race deck and the bullet.

The evening belonged to Joey Pasquali and all the greater fools in the fleet that show up every fortnight to better their last, with little chance of taking a bullet. This win was for all the men and women in the fleet, forty plus sailors deep this season. In its ranks were 25 year old Cameron Biehl who lives on his sailboat in Moss Landing, answers to the callsign "Biehl Street." Also included is 40 year old robotics entrepreneur and soon to be dad, Tobin Fisher, callsign "Fisher," and 17 year old Stanford bound Marion Lepert, callsign Lepert, who makes the trek regularly from Palo Alto to race. Not to be outdone, 40 year old Adam Vance, callsign "The Canadian," regularly jets in to race from his home in Seattle. And finally, "The Bosnian Mastermind," Amil Cobel, whose progress from season to season has been dwarfed only by Joey Pasquali.

Another race night is in the books as the Cressy takes a victory lap across the bay. Big ups to Barbara Solivan, The Doc, and all of RC crew for their tireless volunteering. Until the next horn, I'll see you in church.