



Hiking out

We were across the line early and Greg Elliott rushed to accept responsibility. "Sorry guys. That's my stuff up, my stuff up completely. Sorry... I've ruined your afternoon."

As it turned out, the skipper's apology proved as premature as his timing had been in the initial run to the line. Despite giving our rum race competition what appeared an insurmountable head-start by the time we'd tacked and tacked again to cross the line correctly, it was soon obvious that sailing on a boat helmed by its designer is advantageous in situations such as these.

By the top-mark we'd somehow closed right up on the four other Elliott 7s out racing as a thank-you to sponsors of the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron's famed Lion Foundation Youth Training Scheme, *Boating* proudly among them.

We were back in the lead, quite incredibly, by the next mark thanks to Greg's intimate knowledge of his recently anointed Olympic-class keeler, and an even better understanding of our fickle Waitemata Harbour playground. Now the skipper implored us to employ our "rock hard abs" once more to ensure we didn't blow the clear air a second time. Sadly my sucked-in 'six-pack' had done pretty much all the hiking it could handle in one afternoon and was back to its more lifelike state – a keg. It was left to Greg, International Paints' rep Matt Hart and Youth Scheme talent Katie de Lange to get us home for a most memorable win.

I'd enjoyed similar insights the previous Friday on *Pulse*, a 10m performance catamaran designed and built by Warkworth's eco-friendly designer Tim Clissold, as

we bashed our way from Auckland to Marsden Cove in the Route 66 race jointly run by the Richmond and Onerahi Yacht Clubs.

It had been a thoroughly enlightening 13 hours helping Tim and his former flatmate, America's Cup mid-bowman Matthew Mitchell, drive us up the Northland Coast in the pitch-black (see *Getting my kicks on Route 66*, p100). There was clearly plenty of time to ponder the world's problems between all the tactical calls and rig tweaking, and we had most of them sorted by Kawau Island. By the finish line off the Whangarei Heads we were all in

agreement – how lucky we were to be sharing the sea and all this banter in light of the Christchurch quake which was still raw 11 days later.

Fast-forward to the following Friday evening as I raced up the stairs at home to report our epic, come-from behind rum race

victory. But the tears in the first mate's eyes, who stared blankly through me toward the telly and the apocalyptic events unfolding in Japan, put everything back into perspective. A ruined afternoon indeed.

I sat there wondering what the world was coming to, especially with the sudden unrest in the Middle East thrown into this already shaky mix. We seafarers understand more than most the power of the oceans but watching the ensuing tsunami toss homes and ships about like children's toys was a surreal reminder of how quickly your number can come up.

Some time later I returned to the start line for hope. As Greg had unwittingly shown us, you must make the most of every sea mile, every breathing moment no matter how bad things seem. There is always a way back. Some

recoveries just take a lot more hiking out.

SEVERAL SUBSCRIBERS emailed early last month wondering why the March issue of *Boating* was conspicuous by its absence on the news stands, let alone in their letter box. The short answer was the earthquake in Christchurch where the magazine is normally printed. We eventually rolled off a press in Auckland the best part of a week late and apologise for the hold up. We trust you understand Mother Nature called the shots and that you eventually enjoyed the read anyway.

The devastating events in the Garden City robbed me of a chance to farewell *Boating*'s long-time photographer Mike Hunter and our general manager Tim Porter. Mike will be settling into his new poolside apartment in Perth by the time you read this. His photos and ready sense of humour around the office will be sorely missed. As for Tim, he's taken up a new role within Fairfax Media based out of Queenstown. Fortunately he will retain his close links with the marine industry and its two leading titles – in the new position of Publishing Executive for *Boating NZ* and our sister publication *New Zealand Fishing News*.

We welcome aboard Stephen Lowe as Tim's successor as manager of Fairfax Media's specialist magazines division.

Happy reading,

Kent

Kent Gray