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N2E 71: YB Tracking and the tale of three races.

ENSENADA, Mexico, April 29, 2018 – **Mighty Merloe**, HL Enloe's ORMA60 and Tom Siebel's **Orion**, the MOD70, approached the start of the 71st Newport to Ensenada International Yacht Race April 27 like thoroughbred horses; chomping at the bit, side by side, jockeying for position, waiting to spring from the gate and best the other to the finish line, in front of the Hotel Coral and Marina.

Orion was defending their 2016 best elapsed time record and **Mighty Merloe** was looking to claim it to go with all the other records it has collected in the last four years. But **Orion** stumbled at the start, one of its hulls slightly over early, and had to circle back to the start while **Mighty Merloe** sailed for the horizon.

Following yet another dual between the two mighty trimarans, as seen thanks to the YB Trackers, it was **Mighty Merloe** at the finish line by 2 minutes and 30 seconds. **Orion's** record; safe for another year.

Meanwhile in Dana Point, the race saw its first ever 1:48:41 finish courtesy of Charles Brewer's **Heartbeat 4**. With Richard Mendoza's **Cricket**, bringing up the rear at 3:21:19 in his Cal20, the entire fleet including a handful of Lasers, completed the first ever N2E Dana Point Sprint before happy hour.

Melissa Herzfeld, who has been volunteering on the check-in boat for 4 years now, was a little surprised when the first Laser pulled alongside, its enthusiastic skipper reporting the sail number and its sole passenger. Conversely, fifteen was the largest crew reporting in this year.

Dennis Pennell's Reichel/Pugh 50, **Blue Blazes**, blazed down the Border Run Course home to San Diego like it was late for dinner, finishing with a time of 7:48:27. Dave Griffins and his **Fair Haven** crew likely had a dinner at sea, finishing the course with an elapsed time of 19:08:31.

The largest boat to finish, Damon Guizot's **Zephyrus**, Reichel/Pugh a 77 had a stellar race, being the first monohull to finish at 12:27:03. Most of the larger boats, which sail outside the rhumb line, crossed the finish line before 2 p.m., Saturday. Racers reported that the coastal winds that propelled many of the competitors into Mexico began perishing about midnight, and stayed lax and shifty through most of the day.

As the sun sets on the Hotel Coral, the YB Trackers show 10 boats still drifting towards the sounds of the mariachi band at between 3.8 and 5.6 knots. With all having less than 11 nautical miles to go, it's possible they will arrive just in time for the fireworks, a fitting finish to N2E 71, given that a burst of firecrackers is how the YB Tracker shows the race starting.

Final results and trophy winners to be announced at Sunday's awards ceremony. Watch race replays online via YB Tracking on the nosa.org website.

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