

Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

When the watery worlds of cruising sailors and racing sailors collide, it pays to embrace the experience and learn from one another

When we arrived in Singapore in 2020 we were so pleased to have a mooring surrounded by other monohulls, having encountered so few of them during our years sailing in Indonesia. Here, at Changi, was a community of like-minded boat people. We all spoke a common language, knew a certain shorthand way of referring to things and shared a love of the sea.

But, we were also two very different species as well; most of the fleet moored there were racers, whereas we were cruisers. Surely boats are boats, right? Same difference? Well, yes and no. Despite having so many similarities, we were surprised to find the things which keep these two types of sailors as distinctly separate creatures.

The mooring field here was crammed and crowded, the start of each weekly race seeing dozens of boats jostling for position around the starting buoy, weaving through the already tightly packed anchorage, heeled over. We cruisers, generally positioned on the outer moorings of the field, being larger boats, would sit, stationary, sipping our hot tea or cold beers on deck, armed with binoculars and cameras, watching the fun of the boats criss-crossing amongst us, and then retreat to the shade and cool of our cabins, where our vessels were firmly in “house” mode.

Each race boat is carefully balanced and considered, down to the weight of each crew member and even how much water they carry on board. The cruising boats, by contrast, welcome any extra weight as more ballast and stability in the water, and happily stock up on heavy provisions at any opportunity. The racers take risks that the cruisers never dare to; they sail for speed and performance, pelting along even in close quarters, making nifty little manoeuvres to gain ground. We probably seem very sluggish by comparison, sailing for comfort and far more cautiously; we reef early and do anything to avoid stressing our equipment.

I have nothing but admiration for the racers that we befriended there. Every weekend, rain or shine, they would be out sailing, playing on their boats, testing the limits of their skills. The rains in Singapore are monsoon ones and would appear as sudden deluges, heavy and unremitting,



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Jess and James left the UK in 2011 in their Crossbow 42 and have sailed halfway round the world, growing their crew en route. Follow their journey at water-log.com

and sometimes set in for an entire day. The winds were light and fluky or else heavy and blustery, with squalls a daily occurrence. Some days would bring nothing but sweltering, swampy heat coupled with a strong tide and we'd often see frustrated crews sailing backwards.

So it was that these two halves of the boating coin sitting alongside one another, the light and speedy racers, and the expansive and comfortable cruisers, each fascinated by the strangeness with which the others used their boats.

And sometimes people would switch sides. We'd convince a racing boat to come out to a nearby anchorage for a night with us, even though for them it would be 'roughing it' whereas we would have all our home luxuries. Cruisers would commonly hop on as extra crew

for a race or two, helping out if someone dropped out, suddenly feeling their bodies put through a faster-paced workout than they usually get onboard.

Plus there was the duality of those at home and those visiting. The racers, although a very international, polyglot bunch, were all at least temporarily at home in Singapore. The liveaboard cruisers on the other hand, were just visiting, pausing for a time or, in our case, weathering the pandemic storm, but always had one eye on the horizon beyond and the wider cruising ground awaiting them. Local sailors had a lot to teach us tourists about the conditions specific to the area, how to negotiate all the heavy shipping traffic that ply these waters, how to play and work the tides, and the most accurate forecasts that you could trust for the constant change that equatorial sailing brings. We, in turn, could tell tales of the voyages we'd had outside the straits and the multitude of countries and cultures we'd sailed through; sharing recommendations for destinations, night and ocean sailing strategies, as well as that subject most foreign to them – how to actually live on a boat.

So rather than two opposing teams, “cruisers vs racers”, these two types of boaters managed to inspire one another and enrich each other's experience, both gaining from the brief confluence when their two watery worlds collided. This is one of the things I most love about the yachting community, how we can rejoice and celebrate our differences, using those dissimilarities to learn more and help one another, and share our love of the water which we can all agree on.

ILLUSTRATION: HOLLY ASTLE