Bill Hilliard Skippers R-Boat to Second Victory for Lechenger Trophy in Ten Hours.

BY HUBERT MITCHELL.

We were imitating a tug boat at Five-Mile Gap when young Bill Hilliard went wheeling and dealing his Anita through the 30-foot passage. After we heaved Pirate free, she grounded again. We pushed again, and went on at last. When we reached the finish line, we learned Bill Hilliard had skipped the Anita to a second win in the Houston Yacht Club's Lechenger trophy race.

But we had been luckier than some of the others, Frieda and Gulnare, for instance. I had expected to see the annual long-distance class from Commodore Harry Hilliard's plushly comfortable motor cruiser, Asteca. But generous Si Simon's, skipper of Pirate, took me on board, despite a full crew.

Ideal Sailing Conditions.

The skipper, former owner of the Pirate, was eminently able. His crew — Clarence Wadernan, Ritz Carleton, "Honey" Schlom and Billy Moody — were as good a lot of sailors as could be gathered. And the Pirate had won for Harry Tallichet last year.

It looked as if I was riding a winner. A few minutes after four o'clock we were maneuvering for position on the starting line. A southeast breeze, fresh enough to beat up a chop, indicated ideal sailing conditions.

The Anita and Frieda nosed out with us on the starting gun. Gulnare, winner of the first Lechenger trophy race in 1927; the Starbound, winner in 1931, and the Alerte, winner in 1929, came out in that order.

Pirate, Anita Lead.

Soon, Pirate and Anita, sister R-boats, left Frieda, two-time winner of the annual classic, behind and were foaming down the first leg beam-to-beam.

Anita gained two boat lengths between the Anita and Pirate, and a further advantage when her young crew covered us as we raced toward Beacon 19.

Honey, being a veteran yachtman, knew what to do.

"Splice the main brace," he cried in salty tones.

And the main brace was spliced all around. Then it was spliced again. It did not make Pirate faster but it made the leg from Seabrook back to Beacon 19 a happy occasion.

In our wake sped Frieda, sailed by Ernest Fay. Then came Alerte, skipped by able Paul Richmond, pulling away from Starbound. The little Gulnare had dropped to the stern after a 10-mile heat.

Anita Goes in Front.

Sailing hard on the wind, on a starboard tack, the Pirate lost two boat lengths to the Anita on the run down the Ship Channel to Redfish. Our lee rail was running under. High chops kept the decks awash, wetting trouser seats and mixing spray with our chicken supper.

The trailing sloops faded into black spots as we put about at Redfish for the long leg before the wind to Double Bayou. The youngsters aboard Anita were putting on more sail. Honey and Billy broke out Pirate's spinnaker.

As we neared the Double Bayou beacon Pirate and Anita were racing beam-to-beam again. The other sloops had been obscured by night. It looked like an R-boat race.

Pirate gained an advantage on the jibe, but soon lost her lead as the Anita foamed off on the leg to Five-Mile Gap. Skipper Hilliard went through the narrow channel as if the time were noon instead of midnight.

Ships Go Around.

We had set a compass course for the pass from 13 miles away. We missed it 15 feet. Overboard we heaved and tugged Pirate from her nest in the mud. Then we missed again, found ourselves nosed up on a shell reef.

As we pushed Pirate free a second time, the sound of flapping sails came from our stern. It was the deep-running Frieda, her keel buried in the sandy ooze. Richmond, despite his "rotating" compass, had managed to bring the Alerte through the gap without harm. He trailed the Pirate through two lazy last laps, gaining with the dying wind, to take second place.

Alerte, owned by Commodore Hilliard, had been at anchor 16 minutes when Skipper Simons crossed the finish line at the Yacht Club.

Trophy Is Retired.

Well muddied with bay-bottom ooze, Skipper Tommy Blake trailed Alerte to report the Gulnare adrift after losing her rudder, and Frieda was tight in the mud.

The race decided, Commodore Hilliard put out into the bay toward Gulnare back to the club harbor.

The eleventh annual Lechenger trophy race had been fast-10 hours for the 51.6 miles. It had been beautifully sailed except for the Five-Mile yacht trap. And it retired for Bill Hilliard and the Anita one of the club's most coveted trophies.