

# Sangha Double Handed

Annelies Wichers



## What's the story behind this picture?



*Sangha at Enkhuizen*

Just another lovely picture of a Trintella IIIa on a late October afternoon, near Enkhuizen. A relaxed picture, perhaps they are cooking a lovely meal, or perhaps this is their last trip before the winter break?

Welcome aboard the *Sangha*, this is the first day of the [Single and Double-Handed](#): an annual sailing competition of four days. The winner? Not the fastest, but the most persevering, thorough, and creative sailor with the most delightful logbook. It is a real marathon with comical challenges, nautical questions, and nigh unending reaches. It brings you to unknown boarders, beautiful waters, and places you never thought you'd sail in October.

This year I signed on with the best crew member on the Northern hemisphere: my son Hille. We've been looking forward to this event for weeks, especially because all regattas have been

cancelled this season. We keep hoping it can take place: Hille needs to be recovered from Corona and the new rules say that all events are banned. A few days before departure, the race is cancelled. But luckily, the participants can complete the assignments on their own initiative, and darling son has made a full recovery. As we say: Hoera It gjit oan! (Huzzah, here we go!)

## Friday 16 October 2020

With a boat full of delicious food, a great mood, and warm outfits, we leave on Friday evening 23 October from our berth Marken to Lelystad. Thankfully, another couple of participants have shown up and a COVID proof arrangement has been made. The sailing challenges can be picked up individually, and they are traditionally wrapped in a tube with padlock. Very exciting, what kind of crazy plans do the organisers have in store for us this year?

## Saturday 17 October 2020

We receive the numerical code by WhatsApp on Saturday morning, and everyone can start when they are ready. The planning: Volendam, taking a selfie in front of Paleis Noordeinde; Makkum, completing a puzzle and an extra assignment; sailing the SG in Het Schulpengat; Vlieland, taking a selfie at the welcoming sign.



*Selfie on Vlieland*

Den Helder, solving a puzzle; anchor for a minimum of two hours; Pioniersstraat 1 in Lelystad, solving a puzzle and an extra assignment. You need to take seven hours of rest each day, and everything has to be reached by sailing. Engines can only be turned on after the piers. All sailing times need to be recorded and a handwritten logbook is expected to be kept.

11.00. It will be a challenge, as the first two days there is hardly any wind, coming from the north, and the last two days are marked by a storm wind from the south. Especially hard for a heavy cruiser that isn't light in the water. With our goal in mind, four great days on the water and the added bonus of sailing the race, we raised and trimmed the sails like we never have before. Gennaker, jib, mainsail, mizzen staysail, and mizzen. Everything keeps going up and down and from portside to starboard side. With two knots of wind from different directions, we sneak across the ship and barely dare to breathe as we approach Den Oever with the speed of a sloth. We decide to use the 'two-hour anchorage' wild card when we are still in the waters. Time for Hille to do some chores. The heater keeps failing since we transferred to GTL. He turns into a regular MacGyver ad creates a day tank from a coke bottle, some tubes and clamps, with a filter from a facemask (thank you this one time, COVID) and there, it's up and running! We're very happy to have a heated ship.

After two hours, the little bit of wind returns. To keep up morale, I bake some bread and cook some mussels. The sheer luxury! We see some pictures of canned meals. But as to not draw attention to our slow boat, we don't post anything ourselves...

There is no more fun to be had with the wind after 20.30. If we're lucky, we reach 0.5 Kts, but also have periods where we don't move at all. Is this the place to drop anchor and catch some z's? Rather odd, not close to the shore. We are close to the edge of the Enkhuizerzand. We decide to go to Enkhuizen by using our engine, with as an ulterior motive or excuse: Hille needs his sleep after having had COVID to prevent headaches. I had a cortisone injection in my shoulder just yesterday, and the doctor had told me: 'two days of rest, ma'am' (of course, I'm sailing a Double instead of a Single, ha!). All in all, we covered 11 miles in 9 hours today. Never did we imagine being this patient in this family. We hope the wind will pick up tomorrow.

### Sunday 18 October 2020

We're woken by our alarm way too early, at 06.00.

An NNE wind is predicted, quickly turning NNW. We're sailing past the piers by 07.00 and can stay the course towards Den Oever. The barely existent wind gives us a wondrous speed of 3.5 knots in the right direction. De Kreupel has not been sailed yet, yikes, giving away some height. Thankfully Hille is taking a nap and isn't around to comment.

We're rewarded by 09.00. Near De Kreupel we find a wind of a whole 10 knots! We run 5 knots right away, but towards Stavoren... We decide to just tack towards Den Oever. A spray of rain gives us a nice wind!



*Hille in full regalia*

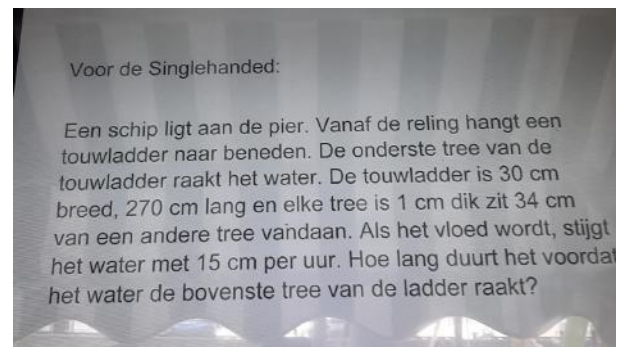
But the fun soon ends, and we wade forwards towards our upwind goal.

We take another look at the tack and realise that we cannot sail over 55 degrees to the wind. The real course is 65 or even 70. Zigzagging doesn't make us more hopeful. We knew it, but still. Hille says that a journey like this can take a lot out of this boat (yes, I know). Thankfully, we love this boat a lot and stay optimistic. So, we keep tacking. And there is actually something nice about it. Dearest son knows all the equipment's secrets (he should, since he installed it) so all sorts of nice things are happening. We are sailing on the right wind angle automatically and we can now use the VMG Velocity Made Good to steer by hand. Oh my Gosh, I spend all of my time staring at gauges. We have such an amazing boat with lovely things. Time flies.

13.45. A miracle: we reach Den Oever. The last few channels were quick and nerve-wracking, as shallow as they were, yes, we touched the bottom a minute. The lock is open, though the lock keep says he has to wait for multiple outgoing yachts, as he cannot work for every single one. Dearest son thinks I never should have asked because it makes the man grumpier. I'm used to them being very friendly to women. The miracle continues: after five minutes mum is proven right, and the man helps us out.

By 14.15 we're sailing again, and tacking is now a party. What is perfectly normal for others is now feasible for us as well. We sail downstream with long strokes, away from the Vissersgaatje. The wind reaches 10 to 14 knots. We average 6. Finally, really moving. We do have a heater problem. The coke bottle is empty. It's a little cumbersome to tap GTL from the engine all the time, so we are looking for a bigger tank. We found it in a hatch! Hille calls the marina to ask if we can fill a small tank instead of tanker-sized tank. Yes, that's possible, but they will be closed when we reach them. When we tell him, we are part of the Twohanded, he offers to leave a filled tank beneath the assignment. If we can leave the money in the letterbox.

16.13. Yehees we reach Den Helder!



#### *Assignment in Den Helder*

The assignment can be seen in the picture above, a calculation task that we can solve on the way. We score our tank and off we go! We leave the port by 16.27. We will leave the SG as it is this year. With the last bit of outgoing flow, we sail towards Molengat. Unfortunately, we get there a little bit too late, as the tide is turning. With a counter current, headwind and unexpectedly high waves we are going backwards! We decide to add some horsepower to move forward. The goal is a fun 4 days! And we want to make Vlieland on this tide.

Hille heads into the galley and creates a magical meal in no-time, despite the heavily swaying and wave-crashing ship. But I don't feel good at all, haven't been this sick even in the gulf of Biscay. The first two bites go straight overboard. The advantage of a moonless night: no one can see me. I keep getting sicker, shivering with chattering teeth. Hille sends me inside, and I am packed with gloves and a hat inside a blanket. This cannot be true; I've never before had to give up the wheel before. The roles have been reversed. Dearest son is now sailing me to a safe harbour. He's an experienced sailor, has raced the Friesian skûtsje, 23 years old with a massive sense of responsibility. But what can experience do in the dark with Wadden ahead? And when entering through the Stortemelk? There's a first time for everything, but I'd rather it be by daylight. He is a hero, even at night. Several hours I feel a little better and can help him recognise the lights. It's long after midnight when Hille takes his selfie and we roll into our bunks, after 18 hours of sailing.



*Annelies sitting up again*

### Monday 19 October 2020

09.00. Southwest wind 4-5. The tide is nice enough to take our normal Monday morning breakfast time in mind. Flowing on a lovely stream, a nearly completely sailed course, with a watery sun overhead, we sail to Harlingen in record time. Wow, this is why we do it. An amazing trip across an almost empty Waddenzee. We are right up against De Boontjes though. The current won't turn our way for a few hours. Wait and then tack? We really want to hurry to get as far as possible today. Tomorrow the wind will be southward 7-8. Okay, we use horsepower again. Around us, brave participants zigzag across the super narrow Boontjes, braving the wind. The Kevlar is flapping around us. Hats off, very impressive! But they can sail a lot closer to the wind...



*Picture 1 Assignment Makkum*

By 15.30 we are gliding into Makkum. We have the sail down within a minute and Hille jumps ashore to get the new assignment. A bonus challenge to sail another round across De

Kreupel. Why not, we can make a few more miles. We discuss how to continue. I haven't been feeling well all day long and would like to stay in Makkum. Hille is determined to sail on, towards Enkhuizen. He is right, we haven't made the right number of miles to finish the race within the set timeframe. Shivering, I am convinced and push through it. A happy thought is that we sailed half around De Kreupel yesterday, so we can sail the other half on the way back, no extra miles for the *Sangha*. The wind is coming from the south a little more, so that means slamming. After a few slams, I feel awful and am back below deck in full winter gear, beneath a blanket with the heater on. All I can hear is the wind and the waves, I can feel the ship is sailing well but cannot enjoy it and feel sad that Hille is now sailing a singlehanded. Hille feels sad that I am sick and so we continue sadly, across the dark, sombre IJsselmeer. I notice that tacking is getting tighter, Hille has found the auto-tack. The closer to the coast of Noord Holland, the easier the boat's movements, and I doze off.

22.00. Why are we tacking so often? "Hille, what are you up to?" I squeal from the floor. "Little busy here!" I hear from the cockpit. Yes, I've noticed, but I'm too tired to ask any more questions, so I just pull the duvet closer. The sounds coming from the cockpit are so unique and enthusiastic that my curiosity wins, and I manage to get there. Right before Enkhuizen a race is sailed with another participant: Jan, the illustrious sailmaker from Zaandam. Hille manages to outsmart him at the last second and the entire, depressing night has been righted for our competitive sailor. Probably not a bad night for Jan either, as he made our unbeatable headsail. By 23.00, guided by starlight, we sail into Enkhuizen. After 14 hours of sailing, it's time for a hot meal.

### Tuesday 20 October 2020

Tuesday morning 20 October. Wind is SW 5-6. We give ourselves a slow start and decide what we will be doing. Go by Volendam for a selfie and then on to Lelystad? In the app we soon read that there will be another challenge, sailing across the Marker Wadden. Boy, another two hours. It could be done, but are we up for it? We will decide once we are on route. Luckily, I feel a lot better. And the expectedly restless waters of the Enkhuizen lock aren't too bad, it could have been high waves with terrible headwind.

Still, it's big laps, but we can still move on. In the five hours ahead, we are fighting to gain speed and height. Near Volendam, it becomes more and more tempting to continue to Marken. And I fold one final time, agreeing with Hille that enough is enough for both mother and son. It's the first time we arrive by daylight. We clean up the boat, have a delicious meal and raise a glass of wine. We toast to the setting sun, beneath the monument on the pier, to 5 amazing days. Hille sighs: "Gosh, mum, I cannot believe you did this by yourself before!"



*Arrival Marken*

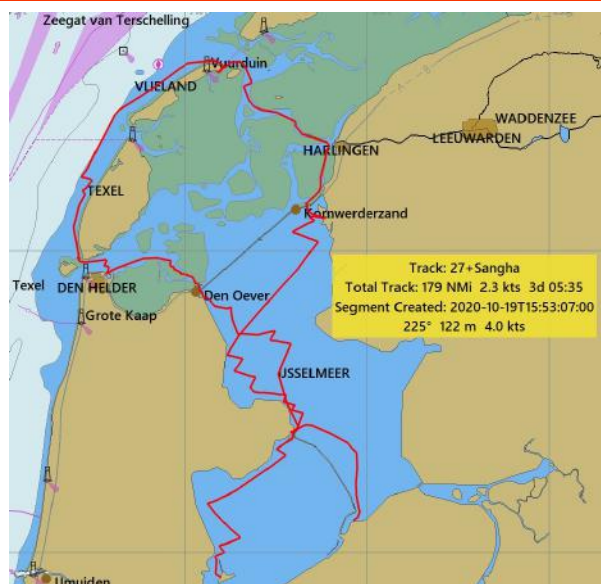
To all readers who want to participate next year, it's this easy: if you can find the solution of puzzles in your nicely warm sailing suit, and can stare into the distance endlessly, then sign up through the website! And if you are a though, *female* sailor, you can even join my crew. Finishing the race cannot be guaranteed, but we do promise a one-of-a-kind race on the most beautiful Trintella ship!

Ahoy! Annelies Wichers.

November 2020

<https://www.singlehanded.nl/>

Pictures: Annelies and Hille Wichers, apart from the first by: Marion Virnich



*Track*