

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Top of the Gulf Regatta, held from the 1st to the 5th of May 2014, proved amongst the most challenging for the organisers, race management and participating sailors.

Despite temple offerings, the weather gods could not be appeased with chairman of the organising committee, Bill Gasson, lamenting that it was "the wettest and most windless regatta in the event's 10-year history."

It was, thus, a trying and testing experience for Denis Thompson and his team of Australian and local race officials. Despite delays and abandonments, it was a credit to them all that they managed to finish enough races to complete a credible series.

Faced with the uncertain political situation in Thailand, it had already proved challenging for the organisers in finding sponsors with potential major sponsors Kingdom Properties and property developer Sansiri and Landrover/Jaguar all dropping out at the last minute, although all had a presence on the water sponsoring participating boats. This left Ocean Marina Yacht Club and its property arm as the principal sponsor although aided by numerous supporters, including the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thai Airways, Singha, MontClair Wines and Gulf Charters to name but a few.

The regatta again lived up to its reputation as the largest multi-class regatta in the region although some classes struggled to make up required numbers. The ocean multihulls had just three entries, likewise the beachcats, while there were no sports boats at all. Altogether some 247 craft (2013 : 253) took to the water.

Numbers were boosted by 134 young Optimist sailors who competed in the 39th Optimist National Championships. These included several sailors from Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and the Netherlands.

Four Byte entries were joined by 35 single-handed monohull dinghies including Laser Standards, Laser Radials, Laser 4.7s and 13 double-handed monohull dinghies split between 420s, 470s and 29ers.

A further 21 windsurfers joined the RS:One Asian Championships, attended briefly by Neil Pryde who opted not to compete in IRC Racing.



classes saw three boats in IRC Racing 1, the TP52, *Oi!*, Kevin Whitcraft's GP42, *Wan Ma Rang*, and Paul Winkelmann's HH42, *Island Fling*. Winkelmann's mission for the regatta was to test the numerous remedial works they've been obliged to undertake on the China-built boat rather than results. Five boats competed in IRC Racing 2, seven in IRC Racing 3 and seven in Cruising.

The skippers' briefing, on Thursday evening (1.May.14), followed by a welcome party on the waterfront lawn at Ocean Marina, kicked-off formalities.

Streaks of lightning overland were an ominous sign as the fleet assembled for the 1100 start of the keelboat races on Friday, the 2nd of May 2014.

First off were the Multihulls followed by the Cruisers, a combined start for IRC Racing 1 and 2 was followed by IRC Racing 3, finishing with the Platus. Starting in an 8-knot breeze, it was not to last, leaving boats floundering and struggling to make the leeward mark. It was perhaps surprising that everyone managed to keep control of their vessels as no incidents were recorded rounding the mark.

The Cruisers and Ocean Multihulls were then sent off on two passage races of 18nm and 14nm respectively, initially around two different marks, then passing Koh Rang Kwian to starboard and back to the start/finish line.

The rest of the fleets were set a further windward/leeward with the wind again fluctuating, which again disrupted count-down procedures.

In the first race for the Multi-hulls, Khun Nim's Crowther 42, *Sonic*, took handicap honours but in the passage race Peter Wilcox's Schionning Gforce 1500, *Mojo*, stretched its legs to take the honours. Khun Radab's Farrier 28, *Cedar Swan*, finished with a brace of 2nd places.

Lennart Fahlgren, with a crew of young local sailors onboard the Far East 32, *Amanda*, took handicap honours in Race 1 in the Cruising class, while in Race 2 a delighted Patinyakorn Buranrom owner of the S&S 42, *Sansiri Windstar*, captured the honours.

David Bell's Jeanneau 35, *Magic*, won IRC Racing 3 whilst Colin



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Lim's Singapore Management University's (SMU) team on the X-99, *Hi Jinks*, won the second race.

Yasuo Nanamori and his Japanese team on the First 40.7, *Karasu*, won the first race in IRC Racing 2 but Bill Bremner's Mills King 40, *Foxy Lady VI*, from Singapore captured the second.

In the three boat IRC Racing 1 class, both races were won by *Oi!* with *Island Fling* and *Wan Ma Rang* trading 2nd and 3rd places in Races 1 and 2 respectively.

Three races for the Platus saw Andrew Moore's Hong Kong Team Tigrana, on *Wikki*, finish with two 1sts and a 2nd. Scott Duncanson's *Kingdom Property* scored an 8th, 1st and 2nd whilst Chris Way's, *Easy Tiger IV* a 2nd place and two 3rds.

Conditions were unsettled on Saturday, the 3rd of May 2014, with the IRC Racing 1, 2 and 3 classes, Cruising and Ocean Multihulls sent on various passage races ranging from 17 to 24nm.

Oi!, *Karasu*, *Hi Jinks*, *Amanda* took their respective honours while *Cedar Swan* held off both *Sonic* and *Mojo* in the Ocean Multihulls.

Shifty conditions for the Platus meant the postponement flag was raised in order to reset the line before the first race of the day got away at noon. Racing was again particularly close with less than four minutes separating the 13 entries. Honours went to

Kingdom Property ahead of *Easy Tiger IV* and Rolf Heemskerk's Team ViewPoint.

Team ViewPoint took the honours in the second race of the day, while Samantha Chu's SMU team on *Magic Dragon* put in a commendable performance to take 2nd relegating *Easy Tiger IV* to 3rd.

Racing for the dinghies, beachcats and Optimists got underway with much enthusiasm among the youngsters, with the fluctuating, thundery conditions adding to the excitement. 134 enthusiastic Optimists on a single start line — quite a sight!

Conditions again did not look promising on Sunday, the 4th of May, with storm conditions ashore sucking the wind away and leaving the start area like a mill pond. When it did return it was barely three knots and swinging between 200 and 250 degrees.

Eventually the RO managed to get the Cruisers and Ocean Multihulls away on another passage race with a downwind start towards Pattaya.

Conditions remained unsettled while a windward/leeward was set for the rest. Unfortunately after the first lap the wind faded and the race was abandoned. A further attempt to get a result saw a shorter windward/leeward course set at 265 degrees but once again the race was abandoned. Some in IRC Racing 3 felt

— continued overleaf



An integral part of the regatta is the Platu Coronation Cup, now in its 29th year, which in May saw 13 entries. The remaining