

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.



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

classes saw three boats in IRC Racing 1, the TP52, *Oil*, 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 Farier 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



TOP OF THE GULF REGATTA

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

Continued from previous page — the race could instead have been shortened at the leeward mark.

It was, therefore, only the Cruising and Ocean Multihull classes that scored on the day with *Windstar* taking the Cruising honours. *Mojo* was first to cross the line in Ocean Multihulls but *Sonic* won on corrected.

It was a relief for everyone when racing on the final day got underway on schedule in bright sunny conditions and a freshening breeze.

In IRC Racing 1, *Oi!* added its fourth bullet for the series. *Island Fling* was caught OCS in the second race of the day and was obliged to restart and *Wan Ma Rang* finally managed to break *Oi!*'s winning streak. After a heavy downpour, it repeated the achievement in the third race to finish with two bullets. Despite having to restart, *Island Fling* finished with two 2nd places to tie with *Wan Ma Rang* on 10 points. However, both had left it too late to topple *Oi!*, which won the series title. *Wan Ma Rang*'s victory in the final race elevated it into 2nd place leaving *Island Fling* with the consolation of 3rd.

Several boats were caught OCS during the second start for IRC Racing 3 with *Magic* and *Hi Jinks* amongst the offenders. However, as storm clouds again built over Pattaya, the race was shortened after just one lap.



In IRC Racing 2, going into the final day *Karasu* was leading the pack but, having squeezed in three races and finishing with two bullets and a 2nd place and a drop race coming into play, *Foxy Lady VI* was elevated to the top of the series table with Sarab Jeet Singh's *Windsikher* 3rd.

Fitting in three races, Jean Rheault's *Souay 1* likewise finished with two bullets and a 2nd place, which saw them tied with *Hi Jinks*. Its 2nd place, against a 6th in the final race for *Hi Jinks*, gave *Souay 1* the series. David Bell's *Magic* finished 3rd.

Amanda and *Windstar* in Cruising were tied on six points after five races including one drop race with series honours going to *Amanda* by winning the final race. Yasunori Osada's *Tai Two* took 3rd.

The Ocean Multihulls all finished on nine points after six races and, taking into account a dropped race but with three bullets, the series went to Peter Wilcox's *Mojo*.

Unfortunately for *Sonic*, after the first race of the day in response to an inquiry by *Mojo*, the RO advised that racing for the class was over. Shortly after this, the RO corrected himself indicating there was, after all, a further race. Meanwhile, having heard the news *Sonic* headed for home, switching off its VHF. A request for redress was lodged but was rejected by the

international jury. Although recognizing a communication error, flags take precedence over radio communications and, as no flags had been flown to indicate there was no further racing for the class, redress was rejected.



After a disappointing 8th place in the opening race in the Platu Coronation Cup series, *Kingdom Property* continued to improve, finishing the series with three bullets. The final race was a close match race against Chris Way's *Easy Tiger IV* with Scott Duncanson getting the best of the situation to collect the prestigious Coronation Cup.

Andrew Moore's Team Tigrana had an off day to fall off the podium placings, conceding 3rd place to Team ViewPoint.

Competing in the 39th Optimist National Championships participants faced challenging conditions from Saturday, the 3rd of May, to Monday, the 5th of May 2014.

The 134 participants shared a common start line for the first day with the results used to allocate them between the Division A and Division B fleets. Unfortunately scoring an OCS in the first race meant several hot contenders expected to compete in the Div A fleet found themselves relegated to the B and, with no discards, carrying a 69-pointer cost them dearly when the final points were tallied.

Several Hong Kong junior sailors participated and for many, in their first international outing, put in credible performances.

Thailand's Sutida Poonpat was crowned national champion and 1st girl in Div A after a consistent performance saw her placed within the top 10 in all five races amongst the 66 participants. Malaysia won the Div A Under 12s with Faolan White of Hong Kong in 3rd.

Somtum Wiyaporn topped the leader-board amongst the 68 entries and also in the U12s in Div B, likewise finishing in the top 10 in all races. Hong Kong's Abbey Hammond from the RHKYC Sharks youth team finished overall 2nd and 1st girl.

Six races were completed for the single-handed monohull dinghies comprising a mixed fleet of 35 Laser Standards, Laser Radials and Laser 4.7s.

Local Keerati Bualong proved unbeatable with six bullets in six races to win the overall Class 9 and the Laser Standard division titles whilst Malaysia's Ahmad Latif Khan B Ali Sabri K finished with five 2nd places and a 3rd to finish runner-up.

Muhammad Amirul Mustaqiim of Malaysia took the Laser Radial title whilst his compatriot, Asri Bin Azman, won the Laser 4.7 series. Thai Apiwat Sringam won the six-race Byte series.

In the six-race, double-handed monohull series, Totsapon Mahawichean and Sarawut Phetsri took the 13-boat combined and 420s titles, while Navee Thamsoontorn and Nut Butmarasri won the 470 title.

Noppakao Poonpat and Nichapa Waiai teamed up to finish 3rd overall and win the three-boat 29er series.

It was a particularly disappointing turnout for the organisers and participants in the F18 and Open Beach Multihulls with just two Hobie 16s and one F18 showing up. With no competition, the F18 opted out, leaving brothers Damrongsak & Kitsada Vongtim racing against Teerapong Watiboonruang & Pasutee Soompalasri. Commendably the latter team beat the Vongtims in Race 3 to avoid a whitewash in the seven race series.

RS:One Asian Championships

Twenty-one racers from seven countries, including Myanmar and Sri Lanka, challenged for the Asian crowns in the Men and Women and the Men's and Women's Espoir* (E-Men, E-Women) divisions on the Neil Pryde-designed board suitable for both men and women.



Sri Lanka's Chameera Gunawardena performed well to finish 3rd in the Men's Division and 2nd in E-Men losing out to Thailand's Natthaphong Phonoppharat who won seven of

eight races to take the Men's crown.

Hong Kong's Sonia Lo Sin Lam finished with a perfect score of eight bullets to win the women's crown. Thai Sarocha Prumpai took the E-Women crown with Hong Kong's Ngai Wai Yan 3rd and 2nd in E-Women with Myanmar's July Hmwe 3rd in E-Women.

Ideally suited to Asian sailors, the RS:One series will see many competitions in Asia this year including the Asian Games in Incheon, Korea, the Asian Beach Games in Phuket, Thailand and the 2014 World Championships in Bintan, Indonesia.

Despite light winds and the frustrations for the organisers over sponsorship, caused by the political turmoil in Thailand, the regatta participants enjoyed the 10th anniversary celebrations, which concluded with the awards dinner on the lawn of Ocean Marina.

After 10 years at the helm of the organising committee of the regatta, Bill Gasson, announced (not for the first time) his intention to step down, passing responsibilities to Ocean Marina.



Gasson has played a significant role in developing regattas in Thailand over the years and will be a hard act to follow, but has indicated he may be available in an advisory role.

** Espoir: Hopefuls/prospects*