



TOP
OF
THE
GULF
Regatta

The Top of the Gulf Regatta (TOG) remains one of the largest multi-class regattas in Asia, which this year saw 214 craft (2017 : 147) on the water.

Held from the 27th of April to the 1st of May 2018, the 14th Top of the Gulf Regatta saw entries ranging from Optimists to TP52s (excluding the kiteboarders and IOM Radio Controlled Class).

The event was organised by the Ocean Marina Yacht Club at Jomtien, Pattaya, and was supported by Ocean Property, under the auspices of the Yacht Racing Association of Thailand.

The Top of the Gulf Regatta incorporates a number of otherwise independent events, including this year the 23rd Coronation Cup, sailed in 11 Platu 25s, the 43rd Thailand Optimist National Championships and, for the first time, the TOG Kiteboard Thailand Championship. (In past years, windsurfing has also been included.

Having started with 71 Optimists in the inaugural regatta in 2005, the increase to 121 this year demonstrates a commendable commitment to youth sailing. This is perhaps best shown by the fact that the female skipper and helm of the TP52 THA72 was none other than Noppakao Poonpat, past winner of the Thailand Optimist Nationals, and winner of the 2010 World Optimist Championships.

Similarly, the growth in dinghy sailing, which also forms part of the regatta, from 25 in 2005 to 65 in 2018 is also commendable. However, this growth has not been replicated in the keelboat or multihull entries.

Starting with 24 in 2005, of which 11 were Platus and four multihulls, numbers expanded until 2012 with a total of 55 entries including 14 Platus and eight multihulls but have since declined to 28 in 2018 (2017: 27) with 11 Platus and just two multihulls.

The participation of overseas boats has dwindled, partly as a result of the proximity of other regattas, ie Samui, and the difficulties in finding crew. Only two overseas vessels participated this year — the TP52, *Ark323*, from China and the Club Swan 42, *Loco*, from Singapore.

The availability of charter boats, in this case the Platu 25s, has certainly helped, as it has at the China Cup.

It must surely be frustrating for the organisers that some 60 monohulls and 30 multis parked in Ocean Marina do not participate. Okay, few are racing boats but there are plenty that could join the Cruising Class.

The TOG Regatta has several advantages over other regattas, most noticeably being marina-based, without the need to get sand in one's Docksiders or having to scramble from RIBs or longtails to get aboard or ashore.

While that may be a preference of some, the convenience of being able to step onto one's boat, replenish supplies and refuel has much in its favour.

Unfortunately shallow water at low tide still remains an issue with some boats needing to exit the marina in the early morning to avoid being left high and dry. Others in the past have opted to moor outside.

Continued overleaf —

Souay 1 leads Magic during the second race of Day 3, storm clouds overhead

Continued from previous page — The setting on the lawn in front of the Ocean Marina property is an ideal venue for the awards functions and extended happy hours, which this year saw Chang beer and rum cocktails (but no free flow wine).

Registration, a practice race and skippers' briefing were held on Friday, the 27th of April, followed by the opening ceremony and cocktail party, originally scheduled for the lawn but brought inside because of the threatening rain.

Day 1 Saturday, 28th April 2018

The keelboats and multihulls were expecting to be out on the water for the first start at 1055 but thunder, lightning and pouring rain resulted in the race officer, Simon James, hoisting the postponement flag ashore. Around 1100, the AP flag was lowered and sailors moved into action despite the drizzle.

James had been drafted in as regular RO, Denis Thompson, from Australia, was unable to make it, although several of his team turned up.

At the time, FH's memory was cast back to 2010 and the description of that regatta by the chairman of the organising committee, Bill Gasson, "as the wettest and most windless regatta in its six-year history." Surely not again . . .

Instead of the usual southeasterly to southwesterly, competitors were welcomed by a northerly. So, rather than sending the Cruising Class off on their usual passage race, James gave everyone a windward / leeward, hoping for improved conditions for the second race, which would usually then follow the Cruising Class on a passage race.



First off were the two TP52s in IRC Racing 1 with Kevin and Tom Whitcraft's *THA72* helmed by Poonpat taking on Li Hongquan's *Ark323* from China. Poonpat did not disappoint, winning the first race.

IRC Racing 2 comprised five yachts with *Loco* taking line and handicap honours ahead of Gary Baguley's *Holman & Pye 52*, *El Coyote*. A ding dong battle for the series commenced between David Bell's *Magic* and Jean Rheault's *J-41*, *Souay 1*, with *Magic* getting the better of *Souay 1* by 3 seconds on handicap in 3rd.

In Class 4 Cruising, regular supporter Pote Suyasinto's *Jenneau 42*, *Le Vent*, finished comfortably ahead of the five-boat



fleet, with the Tartan 4000, *Dream*, 2nd and Team Splay from Japan on the chartered *Sariya* 3rd.

In the Multihull Class, there was a real contrast between the two competitors. Ocean Marina's Kirati Assakul's 10.5-tonne Crowther 42, *Sonic*, taking on Demachy Dominique's 900kg KL28, *Edenko*. The latter took line honours, the former handicap.

Once again, the 23rd staging of the Coronation Cup, instituted in 1996 to celebrate the anniversary of the coronation, in 1956, of the late King Rama IX, was keenly contested with 11 Platus. Reigning champion, Rolf Heemskerk, and Team Viewpoint were back to defend their title against five Thai entries, Chris Way from Australia and his Easy Tiger III Team, Team Doolalli from UK and three teams from the Singapore Management University (SMU). Thai Platu, *Pine-Pacific*, took the first race with Team Viewpoint 2nd and Easy Tiger III 3rd.

Given the miserable conditions, and little chance of improvement, the competitors seemed most relieved when the RO sent the fleet to shore.

Day 2 Sunday, 29th April 2018

With conditions highly variable, James opted for a windward / leeward for all, dropping the AP flag at 1224. As the two TP52s approached the windward mark, a huge wind shift and rain saw the race abandoned, with a decision in 20 minutes.

Eventually, with the wind having swung south, new courses were set, taking the fleet on island passage races of 14 to 18 nautical miles. The cruisers were least well prepared for their start with only *Le Vent* near the line, followed by a heavily-reefed *X-99*, *Sail Quest Hi Jinks*. Battling the current and wind, it took seven minutes for

Khao Phetploy to reach the line joining the multihulls for their start which were also two minutes behind when crossing.

With four classes away, the RO turned his attention to the Platu fleet, setting a windward / leeward course with the windward mark at 0.9nm at 180 degrees. With their first race over in just under an hour, they were immediately sent off on a second. In the first, Team Viewpoint was chased by *Pine-Pacific* and *Pim* while Team Easy Tiger III, Team Doolalli and *Le Vent* took 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the second.

On returning to the finish, *THA72* led *Ark323* to make it two in a row for line and handicap honours.

In IRC Racing 2, *Loco* likewise made it two in a row, followed by *El Coyote* and the Australian chartered Beneteau 44.7, *Fujin*. Although bringing up the rear, *Magic* having been 20 minutes behind *Loco* before heading for home, was only 26 minutes behind on elapsed time at the finish in a dying breeze.

Le Vent took line honours in Cruising, but it was the sailing students on Tim McMahon's *Hi Jinks* that clinched the win on handicap.



Bill Gasson and kiteboard winners

Edenko finished 56 minutes ahead of the heavyweight *Sonic* and hung on for a win on handicap by 14 minutes.

In place of windsurfing this year, the kiteboarders joined the regatta with conditions likewise disrupting their programme. Back at Ocean Marina, prizes were awarded to Nichanan Rudtheng winner of the Women TT:R Slalom, Pichit Poolsaguan Men Thai B TT: R Slalom and Narapichat Pudia Men TT: R Slalom, with Rachan Taktin winning the Men Formula Kite.

Day 3 Monday, 30th April 2018

FH had the pleasure of joining *Souay 1* for two windward / leeward races with the windward mark set at 1.2nm and the inner at 0.9nm at 140 degrees.

IRC Racing 1 got away on schedule at 1100 in the 8- to 10-knot breeze for three laps of the long course. Approaching the line, *Ark323* was early, gybed and lost momentum, allowing *THA72* to take an early lead.

In IRC Racing 2, *Souay 1* was well positioned at the start ahead of *El Coyote*, but left them enough room at the committee vessel to squeeze through, whilst *Magic*, *Loco* and *Fujin* were aligned nearer the pin.

All did not go as smoothly as expected on *Souay 1* in hoisting or dropping the kite but the skipper remained remarkably calm throughout. *Magic* on this occasion got ahead but was hauled in on the final downwind leg.

A second race was started and, commencing the second and last lap, *Magic* was slightly ahead of *Souay 1*. With storm clouds approaching from the south, a tactical call kept *Souay 1* on the right side of the course from where it was able to close the gap on *Magic* at the windward mark. With the wind continuing to freshen, *Souay 1* managed to overtake *Magic* and, in a two-sail race back to the finish, managed to hold off *Magic's* challenge finishing 2nd just 12 seconds behind *El Coyote* on handicap. *Loco* was 3rd, having already won the first race.

Although trailing *THA72* around the course, *Ark323* won the second race by 15 seconds proving that *THA72* wasn't invincible.

In Cruising, Team Splay won the first race and *Le Vent* the second.

Honours were shared in Race 3 and 4 for the multihulls with *Sonic* winning the first, *Edenko* the second.

In the first race of the day, Race 4 for the Platus, *Pine-Pacific* kept themselves in contention for a podium position with a win

ahead of *Pim* in 2nd and Team Viewpoint 3rd. In the second, *Royal Thai Navy* kept their hopes alive beating both Easy Tiger III and Team Viewpoint at the finish.

Day 4 Tuesday, 1st May 2018

The skies were brighter for the final day with patches of blue sky, the only ingredient missing . . . a consistent breeze.

IRC Racing 1 got away on the first of their two races, both won by *THA72* to take the series title ahead of *Ark323*.

IRC Racing 2 completed just one race with *Loco* adding a fourth bullet out of five races to take the series. *El Coyote* added its fourth 2nd place to finish 2nd in the series while *Souay 1* held off *Magic* by one point to clinch 3rd in the series.



Royal Thai Navy and Pine-Pacific

Le Vent was leading the series in Cruising going into the last race but, with Team Splay winning the last race and *Le Vent* 3rd, Team Splay claimed the series honours relegating *Le Vent* to 2nd. A 2nd in their final race meant Captain Tim and his sailing students on *Hi Jinks* had much to celebrate at the closing banquet with their 3rd place finish in the series.

Sonic added a final win to claim the Multihull series win over *Edenko*.

Taking into account a discard, Team Viewpoint was tied on eight points each with *Pine-Pacific* going into the first of two races on the final day, with Easy Tiger III just one point behind. Despite a 7th in the first and a 5th in the second, the latter hung on for 3rd in the series. Victory in Race 6 for Team Viewpoint and 2nd place for *Pine-Pacific* took it down to the wire in the final race, where a 6th and 7th for Team

Viewpoint and *Pine-Pacific* respectively was sufficient for Team Viewpoint to retain the Coronation Cup for a second year. Surprisingly, once again the skipper, Rolf Heemskerk, was not around for the ceremonial award of the Cup.

"We did the best we could with the facilities we had" concluded the RO.

The closing function on the lawn of Ocean Marina was, as always, an enjoyable affair with an array of food and beverages once again bringing the curtain down on another successful regatta.

Try to be there next year!