

held from the 30th April to the 5th of May 2019, the 15th edition of the Top of the Gulf Regatta heralded a number of changes and developments.

Promoted as the largest multi-class sailing regatta in Asia, the event is staged out of Ocean Marina Yacht Club in Sattahip, Thailand.

Four keelboat classes — IRC 1, 2, 3 and Platu, and one multihull class — raced over five days, an increase of one day over past events. They were joined by four dinghy classes.

The most noteworthy development this year was the inclusion of the Thailand SW14 Para Sailing Championships, involving seven double-handed teams. In support of a National Thai Para Sailing Team, Ocean Marina has purchased a fleet of dinghies from Far East Yachts.

The windsurfers were also back this year with three RSX and five RS One, surprisingly all from Malaysia, no doubt practising for the SEA Games in Subic Bay (November).

A further 12 yachts competed in the IOM Radio Controlled Class, requiring considerable dexterity by their operators in conditions that were on occasions stretching their normal tolerances.

The regatta has normally included the Thai National Optimist Championships which traditionally has attracted well over 100 entries. Instead, this year it became the Thailand Optimist Open Championship with 60 in the Gold fleet and 25 in the Silver. Overseas entries were mostly from Malaysia (15) and Singapore (4) with Peter Jessop the sole representative from Hong Kong's Hebe Haven Yacht Club.

The Platus have traditionally competed in the Coronation

Cup, which was introduced in 1996 to celebrate the coronation of King Rama IX on the 5th of May 1950. This year, after his passing in October 2016, the event was dispensed with. However, the new King's coronation on the 4th of May 2019 also corresponded with the regatta so perhaps the event will be reinstated next year.

Day 1 Wednesday 1.May.19

First off, in bright conditions, on a two-lap windward / leeward, with the mark set at 0.9-nautical-mile at 315 degrees, were the Platus. *Puma* was well placed at the start along with Team YRAT (Yacht Racing Association of Thailand) and Chris Way's Australian team on *Easy Tiger*. Next off were the three multihulls on a 24nm islands race.

Regatta co-chairman Kirati Assakul on his Crowther 42, *Sonic*, and Bob Garner's Diam 24, *Bladerunner IX*, led off the line, whilst the KL 28, *Edenko*, followed.

Only Ray Roberts' Team Hollywood appeared on the TP52, *Provezza*, on the start line for IRC 1 for their two-lap windward / leeward race with the mark stretched out to 1.5nm. But *THA72* showed up



Moon Shadow

for the second race having fixed its hydraulic issues.

Hugh Halliburton's Adams 10, *Tenacious*, and Peter Hewson's chartered Beneteau First 44.7, *Fujin*, led the IRC 2 fleet across the line on their two-lap windward / leeward to the outer mark followed by Pana

Trungkabuncha's X-52, *Lawana*,

and Stephen Laker's Mini 6.5 Transat, *Ink Zone*.

It was a close start in IRC 3 with Tim McMahon's X-99, *SailQuest Hi Jinks* (students and instructors from his sailing school onboard) and Mick Grover's Davidson 35, *Moonshadow 2* (ex-*Sophia*) in the front row, followed by Lars Zika's Sweline 37, *Twilight Sparkle*. The Japanese Team Spray on the Yamaha, *Sariya*, was slow to start on their shorter two-lap course.

Having completed the first race the race officer, Jerry Rollin, sent the fleet, except the Platus, off on islands courses.

The Platus completed a further two races for which the wind had swung to 280 degrees. Having recruited Steve McConaghy, from last year's winners Team Viewpoint, *Easy Tiger* won Races 1 and 3 finishing 2nd in Race 2. Team Viewpoint finished with a 4th, 1st and 6th with *Pine Pacific* the best of the rest.

After a four-hour jaunt around the islands, Team Hollywood claimed its second bullet of the day in IRC 1 finishing comfortably ahead of *THA72*, which had Thai starlet Noppakao Poonpat, the 2010 World Optimist Champion, back helming as she did last year.

In Race 1 in IRC 2, *Fujin* in 2nd was beaten to the finish by *Tenacious* by just one minute on corrected and, after five hours on their islands race, *Tenacious*

added a second bullet for the day. *Moonshadow 2* took line and handicap honours in their first race with *Hi Jinks* 2nd and Team Spray 3rd. After their four-hour islands race the three of them all finished within 87 seconds of each other, led by Team Spray. But *Moon Shadow 2* won on handicap.

Just the one six-hour race for the multihulls meant crews were exhausted by the time they returned. *Edenko* took line honours but was relegated to 3rd on handicap behind *Sonic* 1st and *Bladerunner IX* 2nd.

There were initially some scoring issues which were subsequently resolved.

The evening's welcome party saw distinguished VIPs welcome the sailors to the 15th Top of the Gulf Regatta with refreshments and cocktails served on the OMYC lawn.

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Whilst waiting for the rest of the IRC fleet to finish the Platus

Day 2 Thursday 2.May.19

Another sunny morning and Rollin had the multihulls away again first on a 20nm passage race around various marks and islands in 10 knots of breeze. But it didn't last and their race had to be shortened. Even then, only *Bladerunner IX* made the

cut-off, whilst *Edenko* retired.

IRC 1 followed on a windward / leeward with Team Hollywood and *THA72* closely aligned. Team Hollywood again got the better of *THA72*.

IRC 2 followed with *Fujin* heading the pack, a situation that held for the whole race, for it to claim both line and handicap honours.

In IRC 3, *Moon Shadow 2* led the fleet with Team Spray hot on its heels. At the top mark Team Spray had taken the lead, while *Hi Jinks* sneaked through on the inside of *Moonshadow 2*. Demonstrating a considerable improvement in performance, Team Spray went on to win its class ahead of *Hi Jinks*.

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managed a second race, *Easy Tiger* won both with Team Viewpoint 2nd in both.

No such luck for the rest of the fleet as the breeze petered out and the RO sent the fleet home.

Meanwhile the dinghies, Optimists, windsurfers

races won by *Bladerunner IX*.

Team Hollywood got the better of *THA72* at the start of their two-lap windward / leeward. However, it made a difference to

IRC 3 start with Team Spray in close proximity. After a second race both shared the spoils with a 1st and 2nd each.

It was again a packed start line for Race 6 for the Platu fleet with *Easy Tiger* and *Stingray* neck and neck. However, at the 1nm windward mark it was YRAT that held the lead, followed by *Easy Tiger* and the *Royal Thai Navy*. The Singapore Management University's *Naid*, and *PIM*, brought up the rear.

In their third race *Pine-Pacific* led *Easy Tiger* through the gate followed by *Stingray* and Team Viewpoint.

Demonstrating the competitiveness of at least the top half of the fleet in its three races, *Easy Tiger* scored a 1st, 5th and 2nd, Team Viewpoint finished with a 3rd, 1st and 5th, *Pine-Pacific* finished 1st in the final race of the day.

Racing for the Optimists, dinghies, windsurfers and SV14s para sailors continued

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with ideal conditions for one and all.

The regatta had been extended from its usual four days to five to accommodate an intended short race day followed by a sail to a nearby island for a beach BBQ. Approval was not granted by the relevant authority so a sausage sizzle was organised on the lawn at OMYC. The youngsters tucked into pizzas sponsored by The Pizza Company.

Demola Du, CEO of Far East Yachts, was on hand to present the daily awards. Entertainment was provided by a former guitarist and singer with the UK pop group, The Brotherhood of Man.

Day 4 Saturday 4.May.19

It proved a frustrating day for everyone. Rain clouds in the morning had blown through by 1000 leaving a level of cloud cover that, at least, provided some protection from the sun.

As the RO prepared for the 1100 start, rumbles of thunder were heard followed by spots of rain. With few zephyrs to speak of, up went the AP flag at 1054 as the fleet awaited a more consistent breeze. It was lowered at 1129 ready for the start of IRC 1, but only briefly as, with just one minute to go, it was hoisted again.

With little sign of any improvement, the RO sent the

fleet ashore in the hope of more wind in the afternoon. Not long after returning to the marina, the AP was lowered and the fleet headed back out only to be drenched by a heavy squall.



Fortunately a breeze settled in which allowed racing to finally get underway at 1510 for IRC 1.

They managed two races. *THA72* led for most of the first race but a tactical call saw Team Hollywood pick the more favourable downwind side to claim another bullet. Both were OCS in the second race and, in the restart, *THA72* was again over, gifting the race to Team Hollywood.

In IRC 2, *Fujin* added another two bullets to its tally while *Ink Zone* finally made an impression with a 3rd, just nine seconds on handicap behind *Tenacious* in their Race 7.

FH had initially joined *Moonshadow 2* but, on returning to shore opted out, so as not to disadvantage the boat in the relatively light conditions. Team

Spray took advantage to secure two wins, while *Hi Jinks* and *Moonshadow 2* traded 2nds and 3rds.

With just one race *Bladerunner IX*, skated away with victory in the multihulls.

One race for the Platus saw *Easy Tiger* OCS with

the Royal Thai Navy winning followed by Team Doolalli on *Stingray* 2nd and YRAT 3rd. *Easy Tiger* won an appeal against its OCS and was awarded 1st place with no impact on the other results.

Day 5 Sunday 5.May.19

After the frustrations of Saturday, the RO initially hoisted the AP keeping the fleet ashore. An hour later a 10-knot breeze settled, the AP was lowered and the fleet headed out.

Multihulls were again first off on a passage race and, not surprisingly, it was *Bladerunner IX* that was first home. That meant five bullets out of a possible six. Having won the first race and finished 2nd in four of the others, *Sonic* finished 2nd in the series, with *Edenko* 3rd. A delighted Bob Garner commented: "It's taken me 11 years and four boats to finally beat *Sonic!*"

Team Hollywood had a slight edge at the start of the first of their one and only race and went on to claim a series sweep with eight out of eight bullets. This was a complete reversal of fortunes for Roberts and his recently-acquired TP52, *Provezza*, with *THA72* (the older *Provezza*, also a TP52) having won the class easily last year.

Ink Zone, with Jean Rheault on the helm, jostled for position to lead the IRC 2 fleet over the line, but it didn't take long for the First 44.7, *Fujin*, to take advantage of its longer waterline. *Fujin* ended the regatta adding two further bullets, making seven out of a possible nine. *Tenacious* finished 2nd, while *Lawana* and *Ink Zone* tied on 28 points for. *Lawana* claimed 3rd on countback.

Hi Jinks led off the start line in the first of IRC 3's two

races. It was overhauled by Team Spray at the top mark and, with a quicker spinnaker hoist, sailed away to win its first race of the day. *Moonshadow 2* came good in the second race to share the spoils. With five bullets against three for *Moonshadow 2*, Team Spray took the series. *Moonshadow 2* was 2nd and *Hi Jinks* 3rd.

The British Team Doolalli on the Platu, *Stingray*, had a good start at the committee vessel end in the first of their three races. *Easy Tiger*, however, rounded the windward mark slightly ahead of *Pine-Pacific*, which then managed to overhaul *Easy Tiger* to win by 25 seconds. Team Viewpoint finished just two seconds behind *Easy Tiger* in 3rd. *Pine-Pacific* repeated its victory in Race 11 of the series and finished 2nd in Race 12 to claim 3rd place overall. Team Viewpoint finished the day with two 2nds and a 1st in the last race for 2nd place overall. With a total of six bullets Chris Way's *Easy Tiger* won the series.

A splendid buffet with free flow Chang, wine and cocktails brought the 15th Top of the Gulf Regatta to a close. The organisers put in so much effort to present these regattas and, whilst international participation is great, more local participation needs to be encouraged. Hopefully more of the Optimist sailors like Noppakao Poonpat helming *THA72* will transition to keelboat racing to ensure the sustainability of the event.