

# Top of the Gulf REGATTA



Consequently with some 160 participants this puts the Top of the Gulf Regatta in the big league in terms of boats on the water, and perhaps Asia's largest over more than one day.

Understandably, the organisers may still wish to attract

Ocean Marina will be hosting the South East Asian (SEA) Games in December 2007<sup>3</sup> and, sensibly, the Malaysian youth team took the opportunity to compete in the regatta and familiarise themselves with conditions. In addition to the 11 involved in dinghies, the Malaysians had two teams — Team Gapurna 1 and Team Gapurna 2 — competing in Platus.

A great feature of the Top of the Gulf is that the youngsters join the parties, adding almost a 'family' feel to the pre- and post-race celebrations.

Meanwhile, back on the race-course a number of participants had obviously not read their Sailing Instructions, in particular about rounding the last buoy before the finish. According to the crew of *The Ferret*, a Platu skippered by Scott Duncanson, they were lying 4th when it dawned on them that those ahead were not aiming for the mark but straight for the line. Leaving it as late as possible they peeled off rounded the mark and captured victory! Having seen this, some of the others backtracked but *Motornet* and *Team Gapurna 2* continued on with the latter even receiving a finishing horn. *Motornet* retired but *Team Gapurna 2* protested the RO for use of the horn, as otherwise they might have gone back. The protest was not upheld.

After the sun had finally broken through, the principal

Asia. Further, the old Platu moulds have been dusted off, and production is expected soon, meaning the regatta has scope for growth in these smaller boat categories.

(RO) Jerry Rollin set the start but a wind shift from the east to the south caused a slight delay.

First away were the five Class 2 (Keelboats Thaicap) sent on a passage race at 1117. One of these cruisers took its time to clear the area, causing further delay for the 15 Platus (Class 4) competing in the annual Coronation Cup.

Five minutes later the four multihulls were off, followed at a similar interval by the six yachts competing in Class 1 (Keelboats IRC) and the sole Sportsboat, *Pornstar*, for a total of 30.

However, part of the appeal of the Top of the Gulf Regatta is that it's not just confined to keelboats. It also draws in young sailors — the concurrent Optimist National Championships attracted 100 entries.

How to get young Optimist sailors to continue into bigger boat racing is an ongoing concern. The Super Mott<sup>2</sup> and Laser dinghies provide an ideal stepping stone for this progression and the Top of the Gulf saw 18 Super Motts and 15 Lasers.



Super Motts and Lasers (top) and a Platu broaches (below)

Whether it's calling in the *bomoh*<sup>1</sup> in Malaysia or visiting the temple in Thailand, sometimes it's necessary to resort to outside help. Like Bill Gasson did at the start of this year's Top of the Gulf Regatta 2007, Pattaya's international multi-class regatta, incorporating the Platu Coronation Cup and the Optimist National Cup.

Chairman of the organising committee, Gasson's obeisance seemed at least to stem the rain, which had fallen continuously for a week leading up to the event.

## Day 1 4th of May 2007

It was, however, still raining on the morning of the 4th of May 2007 when the keelboats and multihull fleets converged on the line off Ocean Marina, Jomtien Beach. Race officer

drama of Race 2 saw *The Beaver* (Platu) lose its mast. Apparently within an hour a replacement was already available at Ocean Marina and the determined crew were out racing the next day.

In appraising a regatta, support services are important. Again, Top of the Gulf came up trumps.

Honours for the day's two Class 1 (Keelboats IRC) races were shared between David Lindahl's *La Samudra* and David Pollard's *Foreign Xchange II* with Pascal Leray's new *Breakaway* 2nd in both.

With *The Ferret* winning the first Platu race, *Naiad* staked its claim for the Coronation Cup by winning the second. Radab Kanjanavanit's *Cedar Swan* took the two Multi-hull bullets.

The evening's party, hosted by Raimon Land for participants in the Top of the Gulf Regatta as well as those in the Raimon Land Chris Kays<sup>4</sup>

Pattaya International 10s 2007 (formerly the Pattaya Rugby 10s), was held in the grounds of their Northpoint<sup>5</sup> development at Wong Amat Beach, Pattaya Bay. The Nomads Bullettes, a women's rugby team from the Philippines, got into the swing of things, their luck holding with a runners-up slot in their first overseas tour.

## Day 2 5th of May 2007

After the rain of the preceding day it was a sparkling, sunny morning that welcomed the fleet back to the start off Ocean Marina. Sporadic puffy cumulus clouds with strands of cirrus drifted in from the south in the 8-knot breeze. However, as 1100 approached, the wind shifted to 210 degrees and the RO was obliged to reposition the windward mark. With the breeze holding the countdown began, with Class 2 (Keelboats Thaicap) again sent on a passage race to Krab Noi, an island some 5nm away.

After their performance on Day 1 the women's team

*The Ferret* was caught over the line and ducked back behind to recommence on port tack with the rest of the fleet on starboard.

In Multihulls *The Sting* had a perfect start close to the committee boat whilst *Sonic 43* chose to change tack before the line and temporarily stalled. The Class 1 (Keelboats IRC) and Sportsboats were the last away on the windward/leewards (three laps) with *Thairaver* surging ahead.

*Breakaway* took line honours followed by *Foreign Xchange II*. Just two seconds separated 3rd and 4th finishers, *La Samudra*, and David Bell's recently acquired *Magic Roundabout*, now sporting a smart purple livery. *La Samudra* clinched victory on handicap.

*The Beaver*, previously dismasted, came back to take 2nd place behind *Naiad*. *Cedar Swan* clinched line honours but

With only three Multihulls starting Race 4 one would have expected there would be plenty of room along the line for everyone. Not so. In an assertive tactic, *Cedar Swan*, hard reaching for the line, came between the committee boat and *Sonic 43* and its outrigger collided with *Sonic 43*. *Sonic 43* continued on to take line honours from David Wales' *The Sting*. *Cedar Swan* retired and unfortunately played no further role in the regatta.

*Breakaway* again showed its pedigree with line honours but the owner, Pascal Leray, was again infuriated to lose out to *La Samudra* on corrected. Kenichi Takahashi's *Motornet* won the Platus.

In the Passage Race 2 for Class 2 (Keelboats Thaicap), Tetsuo Ogino's *Missy* took line honours for the shortened course but lost out to the 2nd-placed finisher *Naranthip* (Erik Haber) on corrected.



La Samudra and Foreign Xchange II battle it out in ideal conditions

from the Singapore Management University sailing on *Amanda* switched from Class 1 to 2 but a similar request by Dick Sanders for his home-built Dudley Dix-designed DiDi 26, modified with a 1.5-foot extension, *Thairaver*, was denied.

The 14 Platus were well bunched for the start of Race 3.

lost out on handicap to the larger *Sonic 43* whilst *Vivace* retired.

With the wind having further strengthened and the first race over within less than two hours, Rollin and team arranged a quick turnaround to have the Platus off on Race 4 at 1308.

With Ocean Marina hosting the evening's function and grey storm clouds gathering on the horizon, the staff did a commendable job bringing the garden BBQ indoors. But the rain put something of a dampener on the whole affair, especially the coconut shell candles which were supposed — *continued overleaf*



*Continued from previous page* — to float on the garden's lake in celebration of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Coronation Day.

### Day 3 6th of May 2007

In the Raimon Land Northpoint Passage Race, FH joined *Foreign Xchange II*. Covering some 37.6 nautical miles, with lots of tacking, the course weaved amongst the offshore islands of Pattaya, including Ko Lan, Ko Sak, in to a mark off Northpoint in Pattaya Bay, around Ko Khrok and back to finish off Ocean Marina.

The RO's plans for a mass downwind start under spinnaker were scuttled when an onshore breeze developed meaning the kites, at least for the start, remained stowed.

*Amanda*, with Singaporean Dawn Phung at the helm, had a good start, demonstrating an obvious competence in racing gleaned,

one suspects, from dinghy sailing.

The Platu, *Emma Mathilde XX*, and the trimaran, *The Sting*, made the running after the 1100 start but both were overhauled by *Breakaway* and *Foreign Xchange II*.

One hour later the fleet was well spaced out but with boat speed down to 5 knots it was time for the kite which immediately powered up the 14-year-old X-412. The breeze however continued to weaken and, shortly after passing the old converted Hong Kong Yaumati Ferry, which has a new lease of life moored in warmer climes, the bulk of the fleet started to close on the front-runners.

*Magic Roundabout* pursued a more perilous inshore route and overtook *Foreign Xchange II*. However, as if it was a thorough bred racehorse *Foreign Xchange II* responded to the challenge, recovered its pride and raced away again. Heading in and rounding the Northpoint mark in Pattaya Bay, *Breakaway* remained in the lead.

Targetting where to point to round Ko Khrok proved

challenging. *Breakaway* headed straight for the island, judging it to perfection, while most of the fleet needed a tack or two. After rounding Koh Khrok it was surprising how much ground had been gained on *Foreign Xchange II*. With *Breakaway* giving *Foreign Xchange II* something in the region of 3.5 minutes in the hour, honours on corrected time were going to be close. Finishing 2nd, 15 minutes 11 seconds, behind *Breakaway* was just enough for *Foreign Exchange II* to take 2nd place after *La Samudra* once again took handicap honours, relegating *Breakaway* to 3rd.

*Emma Mathilde XX* took the honours in Class 4 (Platu) whilst *Sonic 43* again won Class 5 (Ocean Multihulls). On the slightly shorter Course 11, only



1 second separated *Fun Wes* from *Panda* at the line but both lost out on corrected time to 1st-placed *Missy* and the fast improving *Amanda*.

Fortunately the weather stayed dry for the Raimon Land hosted party where a live band and magician entertained.

### Day 4 7th of May 2007

Having been blessed by good weather for three days the postponement flag finally had to be raised onshore for all classes. However, once the flag was lowered, and again wanting to experience the thrills and spills of the dinghy fleets, FH joined Optimist RO Damrongsak Vongtim<sup>6</sup> on the committee boat.

The enthusiasm on the water was infectious. Fourteen-year-old Malaysian, Khairunnisa Binti Mohd Affendy, won the girl's event, whilst Thailand's silver medallist in the Optimist Class at the 15th Asian Games in Doha, Navee Thamsoontorn, excelled on his home turf to win the Optimist National Cup.

The enthusiasm and agility demonstrated by the older youths on their Super Motts and Lasers was equally impressive. Despite frequent capsize they just righted their craft and sailed on.

Back on the Keelboat course, after the postponement flag was lowered, there was still hope for two windward/leewards. The onshore breeze remained relatively light.

Among the crew of *Naiad*, there was much excitement. With just two races to go, they held a 2-point lead over — *continued on page 79*

*Continued from page 22 — The Ferret.* Meanwhile *The Ferret* needed a win, and to beat *Naiad* by at least two boats.

*The Ferret's* challenge came to nothing, though, finishing 6th whilst *Naiad* took 3rd. In Class 1 (Keelboats IRC), *La Samudra* was relegated to 4th with *Magic Roundabout* taking its first bullet

In Class 2 (Keelboats Thaicap), the vastly improved Singapore girls on *Amanda* came good to taste victory. In Class 5 (Ocean Multihulls), *The Sting* ran away with the honours.

It was disappointing for some, but not those on *Naiad*, when with a squall looming down on the course the RO called a halt and cancelled the last race. Shrieks of delight from the *Naiad* crew confirmed they had won the Coronation Cup.

While the Super Motts and Lasers had safely returned to the marina, the Optimists were less lucky with many capsize as they tried, but failed, to beat the squall to return to the safe haven of the marina.

The formal presentations of the trophies followed ashore with various

naval dignitaries in attendance. As Bill Gasson (below)



commented, "The third year is always the most difficult." But, blessed with good winds, the regatta was an outstanding success and again those that stayed away were the only losers.

Mark your diaries for next year's event — 1st to the 5th of May 2008.

**1 bomoh — witch doctor in Malaysia**

**2 Super Motts — designed and originally sailed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej**

**3 SEA Games — 6-15 December Ocean Marina**

**4 Chris Kays — Bali bombing victim**

**5 Northpoint — comprises twin 54- and 46-storey towers with a range of apartments**

**6 Damrongsak Vongtim — Gold medallist in Hobie 16 Class at the 15th Asian Games, Doha 2006**