



After 'the wettest and most windless regatta in the event's 10-year history', it was back to the temple for the organisers to make offerings and prayers to ensure there would be no repeat of the 2014 conditions.

The Top of the Gulf Regatta prides itself on being the largest multi-class sailing event in Asia. There are now six keelboat and multihull classes, and five for the Optimists, dinghies, beach cats and windsurfers.

Total entries this year were 182 (2014 : 247). Numbers were down in the ocean multihulls and, surprisingly, no Corsair trimarans competed. None of the F18s or beach cats showed up and the windsurfers were nowhere to be seen (2014 : 21).

Last year, there were 134 Optimists. This year, 108 competed in the 40th Thailand Optimist National Championships. The 13 Platus (2014 : 13) enjoyed lively competition for the 20th Coronation Cup\*. Both the Nationals and Cup are held in conjunction with the regatta.

The event, however, retains its unique flavour and, unlike other regattas in Thailand, benefits from being marina-based. The convenience of stepping on or off one's boat, instead of being ferried by longtail, is certainly appreciated.

Significant improvements have been made at Ocean Marina which has taken over the organisation from 'founding father', Bill Gasson (now co-chairman). Additional pontoons have been added and the entrance has been dredged. Improvements are being made to the catering and the food at the closing night function was excellent.



**Friday 1st May 2015**

The forecast did not look promising for the start of the keelboat races on Day 1, although the hope was it would improve as the regatta progressed.

First off on a windward/leeward were the three ocean multihulls, including two regulars, Khun Nim's Crowther 42, *Sonic*, and Khun Radab's Farrier F9A, *Cedar Swan*, and Brett Dryland's recently-completed Alibi 56, *License to Chill*. The four cruisers went next, followed, in a combined start, by the five 40-footers in IRC 1, along with an assortment of seven yachts making up IRC 2. Last off were the 13 Platus competing for the Coronation Cup.

Conditions on the course were disrupted by a major

wind-shift caused by an inland storm, which resulted in the rapid relaying of marks, something the race management team would become quite good at by the end of the regatta!

Normally, passage races would be scheduled for the second race of the opening day but the light conditions ruled that out and, eventually, a second windward/leeward was held, with the Platus even managing a third.

The Sydney GTS 43, *EFG Mandrake III*, took handicap honours in IRC 1 in Race 1 while Kevin Whitcraft's GP42, *Wan Ma Rang*, won Race 2 by just 14 seconds.

In IRC 2, John Morris' Archambault 35, *Iolanthe III*, scored a 1st in Race 1 with only three of the seven entries finishing within the time limit. Lennart Fahlgren's Tasker Far East 32, *Amanda*, sporting its new suit of UK Titanium Ui sails, took 2nd and won the second race.

In Class 4 Cruising, perennial participant, Yasunori Osada, in a chartered Beneteau First 21.7, *Tai Two*, the smallest boat in the fleet, benefited from the light conditions to add two wins to its tally ahead of Martin Brown's Cal 33-2, *Nautical Wheeler*. *Cedar Swan* convincingly won both line and handicap honours in Class 6 Ocean Multihulls.

Demonstrating the competitiveness of the one design Platu class, three different yachts tasted victory, with Chris Way's, *Easy Tiger IV* (AUS), Ben William's *The Fox* (HKG) and Scott Duncanson's *Kingdom Property* (AUS) winning Races 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Demonstrating that consistency pays, Wiwat Poonpat's *Le Vent 2* with three 2nd places topped the series leaderboard.

The awards presentation was held on the lawn at Ocean Marina where the Singha beer flowed for a couple of hours and where the girls serving Spanish wine, Finca de Malpica, received much attention.

**Saturday 2nd of May 2015**

There was, again, barely five knots when racing got underway on the planned point-to-point race. During the countdown procedures for the start of the multihull race, George Foose's Tartan 40, *Dream*, was on the receiving end of some sharp words from Khun Radab of *Cedar Swan*. It was later learned that *Dream*, seeing the green Cruising boats' flag, thought that it was starting with the Ocean Multihulls. Actually, the green flag was to indicate a starboard rounding of the windward mark. Khun Radab later received an FH race officer's prize for his 'advice' to Foose and crew!



IRC 1 and 2 completed a windward/leeward race before heading off on their point-to-point race, whilst the Platus again got three windward/leeward races under their belts.

Mick Tilden's Beneteau 43, *Fujin* (ex-*Ichiban*), initially took the honours only to be disqualified later after failing to turn up for a protest hearing over a mark rounding incident, with *Foxy Lady VI* subsequently being elevated. *Amanda* added a second bullet in the IRC 2's windward/leeward.

Fortunately, the breeze strengthened as the day progressed, building to 12-14 knots for their homecoming on the point-to-point race. With Bill Bremner unavailable for the regatta, Steve McConaghy took over helming duties for the Mills King 40, *Foxy Lady VI* (ex-*Blondie iv*) and brought home honours in their race.

Gary Baguley's H&P 52, *El Coyote*, was smoking on its way home in the point-to-point race to take IRC 2 handicap honours with *Nautical Wheeler* winning in Cruising. *Cedar Swan* added a third bullet in Ocean Multihulls.

Four-time winner of the Coronation Cup, Scott

Duncanson, took advantage of the conditions to secure three bullets on the day on his Platu, *Kingdom Property*, and lead the series ahead of *Easy Tiger IV* and Andrew Moore's (HKG) Team Tigrina on *Wikki*. *The Fox* (HKG) remained in contention in 4th place, with two-time winners Ben Williams and Warwick Downes onboard.

**Sunday 3rd May 2015**

FH joined Gary Baguley on *El Coyote* for what was expected to be a windward/leeward and another point-to-point race. However, the wind again died at the end of the first race and the RO opted instead for a second windward/leeward, except for the Cruising Class

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*Continued from previous page* — (they had already been sent on a point-to-point race). But this time around, only two boats finished; *Amore* and *Thai Two* didn't. *Dream* took line and handicap honours over *Nautical Wheeler*.

In IRC 1, 1st place honours were shared between *Foxy Lady VI* and *Fujin*, with *Foxy Lady VI* leading *Mandrake III* going into the final day by three points.

The slogan on the shirts of the *El Coyote* crew 'Born to Sail, Forced to Work' was quite appropriate and work hard they did in finishing 2nd in the first and 6th in the second. The A35, *Iolanthe III*, with its optimised IRC rating, took Race 5. Patinyakorn (Ging) Buranrom's S&S 42, *Windstar*, benefitted from the lighter airs to win Race 6 with *Amanda* 2nd giving it a one-point advantage over *Iolanthe III* going into the final day.

It proved a rewarding outing for Khun Nim and crew on *Sonic*, which converted its 3rd place finishes into 1st place handicap honours in both races, trailing *Cedar Swan* by only one point at the start of the final day.

Two further races for the Platus saw *Kingdom Property* take victory in Race 7 and 3rd in Race 8 in which *The Fox* took the crown. With one day to go, *Kingdom Property* had wrapped up the series in the absence of a major mishap.

That night, presentation of the awards for the Optimists and dinghies drew rapturous applause from both local and overseas sailors.

### Monday 4th May 2015

There was barely 2 knots of wind, varying from 230 to 270 degrees, when the keelboat fleet assembled for the final day's racing. FH joined *Amanda*, owned by Lennart Fahlgren, a member of the Royal Swedish Yacht Club\*\*.

The AP postponement flag was finally lowered at 1139 allowing the multihulls a start six minutes later on the first of a two-lap windward/leeward, followed by the Cruising Class on another point-to-point race around Ko Rang Kwan.

*Amanda* in IRC 2 was well positioned at the combined start, with IRC 1 heading for a windward mark at 1.3nm at 240 degrees. Despite the grey skies, the contrasting green hues of the sea with flashes of lightning and rumblings of thunder ashore made for a picturesque setting.

The 8- to 9-knot breeze began to ease at the leeward mark before picking up for the second lap. *El Coyote* took line honours followed by *Iolanthe III*. It was an anxious time on *Amanda* approaching the finish line and needing to finish within 10 minutes

of *Iolanthe III*. In the end, a 26-second margin gave *Amanda* the win on handicap and an additional point advantage, ie. a two point advantage, for the series going into the final race.



The RO opted for a point-to-point race for the final race of the day and regatta. Again, *Amanda* nailed the start with *Hi Jinks*, *Le Vent*, *El Coyote*, *Magic* and *Iolanthe III* all trailing. The breeze continued to fluctuate with occasional headers as *Amanda*, following *El Coyote's* tactics, headed towards the coast, whilst *Windstar* stayed further

offshore. Sadly, *Amanda* found the one and only hole, costing it dearly before the breeze returned. It was again an anxious finish but, finding itself in last position some 20 minutes behind the leader, and 6th place on handicap, *Amanda* had surrendered its two-point advantage and conceded series victory to *Iolanthe III* with *El Coyote* 3rd.

In IRC 1, despite the absence of Bill Bremner, *Foxy Lady VI* went into the final day in lead position for the series. The initial results gave Race 7 to *Mandrake III*. However, an incident at the combined IRC1 and 2 start line, saw them tangle with *El Coyote* and get disqualified with a six-point penalty. *Foxy Lady VI* proceeded to win the final race and wrap up the series. *Mandrake III* held on to 2nd place in the series with *Wan Ma Rang* 3rd.

Despite *Tai Two* finishing last in the final Cruising class race, *Osada* hung on to win the overall title ahead of *Nautical Wheeler* and the fast improving *Dream*.

The final race for Ocean Multihulls saw *Sonic* make it three in a row for Khun Nim, co-chairman (with Gasson) of the regatta, to level the score with *Cedar Swan* and despite dropping a 3rd place, as opposed to a 2nd place by *Cedar Swan*, took the series by its win in the last race.



It was noon when the first of two Platu finals got underway with Scott Duncanson's *Kingdom Property* taking the first with a win over *Easy Tiger IV*. Demonstrating the competitiveness of the fleet, only 41 seconds separated 2nd and 10th place. Having wrapped up the series, *Kingdom Property* opted out of the final race leaving *Easy Tiger IV* tied with *The Fox* going into the final race. A tactical call on *The Fox* saw them pick the wrong side of the course and concede the final bullet and 2nd place in the series to *Easy Tiger IV*. Having competed in and won, with the skipper Ben Williams, the very first Coronation Cup held in Hua Hin in 1996, Warwick Downes and Williams are keen to return again next year to improve on their 3rd place.

The evening's awards function was, as always, a splendid affair with a wide variety of Thai culinary delights on offer, washed down with copious quantities of Singha beer and Finca de Malpica wines from Spain. The Minister of Tourism & Sport, Mrs Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul, was on hand to present the awards.

Earlier in the regatta, the RO had taken flak for his point-to-point races. Several boats had been unable to finish within the time limits. Obviously the objective of a RO is to try and give everyone a finish, even if it means shortening the race. However, by the end of

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One of the features of the Top of the Gulf Regatta is the inclusion of dinghies, providing the youngest of Optimist sailors a pathway to maintain their interest in sailing long into the future.

In the 40th **Thailand Optimist National Championship**, 1-3 May 15, the 108 sailors started to determine their positions in the A or B fleets. Competitors included 13 Malaysian and nine Hong Kong sailors. The RHKYC's Sharks team did well with Duncan Gregor finishing in 13th place and winning the Under 12 title.

Finishing with seven bullets and one 2nd place, the new champion was Suthon Yampinid who received his award from the former 1977 and 78 champion, Mark Tehelstcheff, back competing in a Laser.

In the **Open Dinghy Races**, under the watchful eye of RO Simon James, the 30 single- and 12 double-handed dinghies completed nine races over the three days. Keerah Bualong (THA) with seven bullets, a 2nd and a 3rd place, defended his single-handed title in his Laser Standard.

It was similarly a convincing win for Thai sailors, Puvich Chanyim & Sarawut Phetsir in their double-handed 420 with eight bullets and one 4th place discard, with Malaysia finishing runners-up.

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Dates for 2016 still to be confirmed, but not to be missed.

\* Coronation Cup : established 1996, the first Coronation Cup coincided with the anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's coronation on the 5th of May 1950. It involved 24 one-design Platus. Designed by Bruce Farr and built by McDell Marine in New Zealand, the Platu was produced specifically for racing in Thailand

\*\* Royal Swedish Yacht Club (*Kungliga Svenska Segel Sällskapet*) : founded 1830, received royal status 1878. The club grew rapidly at the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century as sailboats became more manageable and affordable. It has over 5,000 members