

TOP OF THE GULF REGATTA

One of the attributes of sailing in the Gulf of Thailand near Pattaya is (supposed to be) the consistency of the breezes. Well, for this year's Top of the Gulf Regatta, while all the other ingredients were in place, the weather threw up some surprises.

Held out of the Ocean Marina Yacht Club, Jomtien Beach, from the 3rd to the 7th of May 2006, Pattaya's multi-class sailing regatta this year again consolidated a number of events, including the Platu Coronation Cup and the Optimist Thai Nationals. All in all there were nine classes including windsurfing (the one sport boat sailed with Keelboats IRC).

Conditions on the water varied tremendously. Race officer for the keelboats and multihulls, Jerry Rollin, said "I've never experienced anything like it. From 12 knots to nothing and no wind followed by 30-knot squalls." But despite the conditions, all keelboat races were completed.

Not so the other fleets. Winds of less than 8 knots caused the windsurfers to lose one whole day, with just two races on Saturday. Thunder, lightening and squalls saw the cancellation and/or abandonment of a number of races for the Optimist, Laser and Super Mott* classes.

Still, sailing would not be the challenge it is if conditions were predictable. Same Wimbledon — two of the reasons it remains the top tennis event is the weather and the unpredictable nature of the grass! We digress.

During the skippers' briefing, chairman of the organising committee, Bill Gasson, reminded participants that the red flags were still up in the area of the firing range but there was no need for concern.

DAY 1 Thursday, 4th May 2006 Raimon Land Northshore** Race

For the first day, FH joined Pouk (aka Captain Araldite) and Simon Makinson, Gary Baguley and crew on *Magic Roundabout*.

Race 1 was a windward/leeward with *La Samudra*, starting assertively in Keelboat IRC only to be recalled. Later, in the final downwind leg, a kite twist cost David Lindahl and crew time but they still managed to come out on top.

Dick Sanders' *Thairaver*, a somewhat dubious inclusion in Cruising Keelboats (Thaicap), used its spinnaker and won on handicap.

Kirati Assakul's, *Sonic*, had its one and only victory in the Ocean Multihulls while Marco Belonje's, *The Ferret*, took 1st place amongst the Platus.



Pouk Makinson receives sail ties from FH editor Chris Howarth (above) and *Magic Roundabout* trails (bottom)

The second race of the day saw the fleet in an 8-10 knot breeze sail along the beach before heading around an offshore island known locally as Battleship Island because of its distinct appearance.

Unfortunately for *Magic Roundabout*, in the course of changing tack, its headsail caught on a spreader resulting in a serious rip. A change in sail was accomplished but time was lost.

Rounding the island the kite was hoisted and with 7.7 knots of boat speed the gap was closed but *Magic Roundabout* still finished a somewhat disappointing 4th, with *La Samudra*, Pascal Leray's *Hi Jinks* and David Pollard's *Foreign Exchange II*, repeating their 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions of Race 1 in Keelboats IRC respectively.

Jim Ellis' *Remington* took 1st place in Cruising Keelboats while Scott Duncanson's *Lee Marine* took 1st in the Platus. Olaf Reese's Firefly 850, *Voodoo Child*, one of three competing, won Ocean Multihulls.

The day's awards, presented by Nigel Cornick, director and CEO of primary sport sponsors, Raimon Land, were made at the Royal Varuna Yacht Club, where a splendid buffet was held on the lawn.

DAY 2 Friday, 5th May 2006 The Portofino Races

Marking the launch of their new property development, the Portofino, adjacent to the marina, where you can 'harbour your dreams', Ocean Marina sponsored Race Day 2.

Initially the postponement flag was raised in the marina until the wind filled in but it was not to last. When they did start setting the course the wind was at 11 knots and a windward mark for the cruising keelboats was set at 215 degrees at a distance of 2nm. For the rest of the fleet a mark due south at 1.4nm was set.

Then the wind started playing games. It was decided to get the cruisers off on their race before reappraising the course for the rest of the fleet. Once they were away the wind had shifted easterly so the mark was re-laid and the committee boat repositioned. By this time the breeze had dropped to just 2.7 knots. By 1345 there was just enough breeze to set a windward/leeward course into the shore. Initially intended to be two laps for all, the Keelboats IRC class struggled in the light airs and was reduced to one lap. *La Samudra* again took line honours ahead of David Bell's *Pink Pussycat*.

Martin Kaye's Platu, *Pom Rak Khun* (I love you), took the honours whilst, in Ocean Multihulls, Roger Kingdom's, *Moto Inzi*, crossed the line ahead of Henry Kaye's *The Sting*. Both however failed to round the leeward mark before crossing the line. *Moto Inzi* retired but *The Sting* did not and, with the protest thrown out for irregularities, *The Sting* won the day which was to impact disadvantageously for Kingdom in the final results.

Remington was some 10 minutes ahead of the cruising fleet at the first mark but

was trailing by some 35 minutes at the second. With the course shortened at the islands, *Thairaver* again finished ahead of Weera Leksomoon's *Wes*.



Keelboat IRC start (above), David Bell's *Pink Pussycat* (left) and a line up of ever-enthusiastic Optimists (bottom left)

The omens weren't looking good as a grey cloud with flashes of lightening crossed over land behind the marina.

The start of the passage race was uneventful. *The Sting* got away ahead of *Moto Inzi* while *X Ta Sea* managed to rejoin the race bringing up the rear.

DAY 3 Saturday, 6th May 2006 Raimon Land Long Distance Races

A short windward/leeward course was set for all but Cruising Keelboats in order to get the regatta back on schedule.

Voodoo Child and *The Sting* were both over the line and given individual recalls. Unfortunately pressed for space *X Ta Sea*, the third and latest Firefly 850 built and only launched the evening before the regatta, tacked into the path of *Sonic* hitting it amidships. Apparently with a damaged spinnaker pole it returned to the marina for repairs but was, later in the jury room, disqualified.

Foreign Exchange II and *Magic Roundabout* were also both over in their starts and were recalled. This gave Suwan Poopuksakul's *Lawana* the opportunity to lead the pack at the windward mark. By the time they reached the second mark, both *Foreign Exchange II* and *Magic Roundabout* had closed on *Lawana*, which then encountered problems lowering its spinnaker and was forced to sail on past the mark. *Pink Pussycat* went for speed rather than direction but lost out when the wind died.

In the end, *La Samudra* clinched victory along with *Lee Marine* and *Cedar Swan* in Keelboats IRC, Platus and Ocean Multihull respectively.

A protest was, however, lodged by *Pink Pussycat* over tactics used by *La Samudra* when rounding an island and almost forcing it onto the rocks. This resulted in the *La Samudra*'s disqualification. The *Pink Pussycat*'s fancy dress crash helmets almost came in useful in this encounter, as well as when they stopped suddenly after tangling with an old fishing net. *Foreign Exchange II*, took the honours in Keelboats IRC with *Moto Inzi* winning Ocean Multihull.

The evening's gala party at Ocean Marina Yacht Club was hosted by Raimon Land, with live entertainment; however, despite an abundance of food the caterers were hard pressed to keep the buffet tables replenished.

DAY 4 Sunday, 7th May 2006

The final day's racing was scheduled earlier with a 1000 start. Again, a windward/leeward course was set. However, like before, the fickle wind played havoc with the best laid plans, which — continued overleaf





boats were soon lost from sight as the squall, with winds recorded at 25 knots, and driving rain encompassed them. Few, if any, could actually see the windward mark and it was more by luck than judgement that several boats converged on it in close proximity.

Continued from previous page — resulted in two reaching legs. With the different classes converging on the marks at the same time, *La Samudra* recording 29 knots of wind and the Fireflies touching in excess of 20 knots, the RO shortened the race for safety reasons.

Results: *Magic Roundabout*, *Cedar Swan* and *Pom Rak Khun* won Keelboats IRC, *Ocean Multihulls* and *Platus* respectively.

On the horizon grey clouds were again looming as the fleet set off . . . straight for the eye of the storm. The

A spinnaker run brought most of the yachts back to the finish and allowed for mid-afternoon awards and closing ceremonies.

Pink Pussycat in Keelboats IRC, Peter Sui-asinto's *Platu 122* and



Voodoo Child, Day 3 (top), *Super Mott* collision (above), *X Ta SeaT-bones Sonic* (right) and multihull start (bottom)

Voodoo Child (Ocean Multihull) won their respective races. In its race, *Remington* added a 4th bullet out of six races

Likewise the rest of the classes had faced numerous challenges under the testing conditions. Sensibly the Optimists were taken off the water when thunder and lightening threatened, but they still managed six races. As always the enthusiasm and chatter of the 74 young sailors was highly entertaining and bodes well for the future of sailing in Thailand.

The girls won the day with a repeat victory, after taking the title last year, for 14-year-old, Benjamas Poonpat.

In the Lasers Thanakan Korkerp took the honours over 10 races, while in the Bytes, Paradorn Chuasa-nea won the series.

In the Super Mott class, 10 races counted with, it is understood, the last abandoned when several sailors had to be assisted with capsized dinghies as the squall passed through the racecourse. Chindanai Tanbuakee took the overall series.

In the Top of the Gulf Asian Formula Windsurfing Championship, which in addition to local riders included those from Japan, Korea and Malaysia, Ek Boonsawaad took top spot.

In Beach Catamarans, Thai champion and winner of the inaugural Hobie Asian



Championships 2005 in Hong Kong, Damrongsak Tongtim, again brought his Hobie 16 to

the fore ahead of Bob Garner's Taipan 4.9.

While the conditions were indeed extraordinary, the increased numbers including, for example, the 23 windsurfers, added additional pressure to the organizers of the event. However, the regatta was still a great success . . . how could it not be in the land of smiles!

*** Super Mott** An avid sailor, Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej represented his country and designed this lightweight dinghy based on the International Moth class

A large flotilla of Super Motts may join the 2006 Phuket King's Cup in celebration of His Majesty's Diamond Jubilee or 60th anniversary of his accession to the throne

**** Northshore**, a new property development of Raimon Land in Pattaya

