TACTICAL RACING AT HYERES

Light and shifty conditions provided for tactical racing for the 39th Semaine Olympique Française in Hyères. In the qualifying races that started with light and unsteady wind, many had collected bad marks. Unfortunately the division into the final groups was made without the drop.

This was not a problem for Michael Blackburn AUS who added a bullet to his results in the top 3 range. The Australian sailor showed his expertise in the class he has been dominating for many years. His team mate and title holder Tom Slingsby AUS had dropped down from 2nd to 29th after a disqualification at the start of the day. Bradley Funk USA took his place in 2nd while Igor Lisovenko RUS conserved his 3rd position. The Australian sailors showed his expertise in the class he has been dominating for many years. His team mate and title holder Tom Slingsby AUS had dropped down from 2nd to 29th after a disqualification at the start of the day. Bradley Funk USA took his place in 2nd while Igor Lisovenko RUS conserved his 3rd position.

Light Airing at Midwinter's East

2007 Midwinter's East Regatta.

Two breezy races sailed on Sunday to conclude the 2007 Midwinters East Regatta.

The Laser and Radial fleets completed their qualification series having been scored with one throw out. They raced in gold and silver fleets for the remainder of the regatta with five more races scheduled. Increasing wind is in the forecast for Saturday and Sunday which should make for some exciting racing.

Saturday brought the most breeze of the series so far with the first race sailed in 15-18 and less wind as the day unfolded for two more races. All remaining fleets have very close competition with two important races planned for Sunday.

Increasing breeze and building waves were the theme for the two remaining races on the last day of the regatta. British sailor Paul Goodison won both Laser gold fleet races to solidify his regatta win. Tight racing continued in the Radial gold fleet between Anna Tunncliffe and Paige Railey as they ended up tied in the final score with Tunncliffe winning the tiebreak with Cameron Hall taking the title for the 4.7 fleet.

The conditions for the Medal race on the last day of the regatta couldn’t have been better: stable wind averaging 15 knots, sun and waves. Racing was set close to the shore bringing the thrill of the last race to the spectators in Hyères.

It was a remake of the Laser worlds with the Australians dominating the fleet in first and second place. With contrasting styles of sailing; Michael Blackburn enjoying light conditions, is one of the most experienced in the fleet with Tom Slingsby preferring the strong breeze, is 14 years younger and has a more flamboyant style. On the regatta circuit they’re always within a few points of each other...Last year, the title went to Slingsby, this year Blackburn claimed it and both working towards a place at the Olympics. "I have lost some weight to adapt to the weather conditions in Qingdao" explains Michael Blackburn. As a result I struggle a bit more in the breeze.” The regatta winner explained his tactics:

Light Airing at Midwinter's East

2007 Midwinter's East, CYC, Clearwater, USA 22 - 25 Feb 2007

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continued page 2...
DEL SOLAR A RUNAWAY WINNER

Central & South American Championships, Salimas, Ecuador 28 Mar - 8 Apr 2007

Mathias Del Solar CHI won his second ISAF Grade C1 Laser Central and South American Championships after leading from start to finish in Salinas, Ecuador. The world #4 took the title ahead of Luis Ocloce PER and Federico Buiatti ARG.

After a pair of bullets in the opening two races, Del Solar never looked back, posting another four race wins in the opening series before capping his display with another bullet in the Medal Race. The battle for the runners up spot was much closer, with Ocloce eventually getting the better of Buiatti thanks to a strong Medal Race. Andrey Quintero COL and Juan Maegli GUA completed the top five.

In eighth place in the 36-strong fleet, Gabriel Moran ECU was the top home performer in Salinas.

In a Laser 4.7 series which went right to the wire, a Medal Race bullet gave Baepi Pinna BRA victory ahead of Alexander Zimmermann PER. Last week 17 year old Arantza Gumucio CHI took the Laser Radial title ahead of Paloma Schmidt PER and Odile Ginaiad BRA.

Meanwhile, in the Radial Class Arantza Gumucio CHI held on in the Medal Race to take the Laser Radial title at the ISAF Grade C1 Laser Central and South American Championships in Salinas, Ecuador. Paloma Schmidt PER came in second, with the open title going to Rodrigo De Moraes Lopez BRA.

It was a fantastic result for 17 year old Gumucio, who came in seventh in last year’s championship in Uruguay. Racing in an open fleet, she came in sixth overall and top women, seven points ahead of Schmidt. In eighth overall and third women was Odile Ginaiad BRA.

**Laser Standard**
1) Matias del Solar CHI 13 pts
2) Luis Ocloce PER 35 pts
3) Federico Buiatti ARG 37 pts

**Laser Radial**
1) Rodrigo de Moraes Lopez BRA 33 pts
2) Allan de Oliveira BRA 38 pts
3) Alexander Zimmermann PER 57 pts

**Laser 4.7**
1) Alexander Zimmermann PER 18 pts
2) Baepi Pinna BRA 21 pts
3) Allan de Oliveira BRA 22 pts

Semaine Olympique Française cont.

"It all depended on the weather! In the light I knew I had an advantage over my opponents, but in case of a windy race, and it was the case today, I had to mark my direct competitor, the Swedish Johan Wigforss who is more at ease in the breeze. We were slow on the start and I controlled him on the first beat. We were the last 2 boats to round the top mark, I finally passed him on the run and gained more places." The tactic seemed to have worked. The Swedish collected maximum scores and missed on the podium by two points. It was Andrew Murdoch from New Zealand who took the third place overall. Tom Slingsby won the Medal Race to bring to 4 the number of victories in the regatta.

In the Laser Radial, Evi Van Acker improved steadily throughout the whole regatta to finally reach the top of the ranking. The placings were open before the Medal race and everything was possible. Jo Aleh conserved her second place while Vice-European Champion and second placed in the Rolex Miami OCR, Gintare Volungevici from Lithuania took third after winning the Medal Race.

**Laser Standard**
1) Michael Blackburn AUS 54 pts
2) Tom Slingsby AUS 66 pts
3) Andrew Murdoch NZL 67 pts
4) Johan Wigforss SWE 69 pts
5) Toni Stipanovic CRO 75 pts

**Laser Radial**
1) Evi Van Acker BEL 46 pts
2) Jo Aleh NZL 52 pts
3) Gintare Volungevici LTU 54 pts
4) Paige Railey USA 56 pts
5) Elin Maria Samdal NOR 57 pts
Do you get inspired by being around a winner?

Do you get tired of people who whine immediately at the thought of adversity? “Somebody should have done something to prevent me from this trouble”, they mutter. Listen to them long enough and you’ll hear all sorts of things that they “deserve” that would better suit their situation. This could be described as a “victim mentality”.

On the other hand, have you noticed other folk who have overcome a whole host of negative circumstances without complaining once? They see the obstacle, evaluate the situation, devise a plan, get over it and go on. This could be called a “champion mentality”.

On a recent business trip to St. Pete, Fl., I read QBQ, a book describing the difference between these two opposite reactions to circumstance. On the same trip, I was also blessed to witness the “champion mentality” all over the place at a sailboat regatta at St. Pete Yacht Club.

One sailor there was Colin Park, a Lightning sailor who did “horizon jobs” on several of us when I sailed Lightnings. Ethan Bixby, World Champion in International 505 and well know in several other circles, was there shortly before I arrived. Another was Bruce Kirby, the well-known designer of the Laser and about 60 other boats. Betsy Allison, five time yachtswoman of the year who I’d admired from afar, was there. These sailors were not the competitors, however.

The most impressive folk that weekend were the competitors in the regatta. I spent most of my time with Karen Mitchell and JP Creignou, but I did meet several others. This was the 2007 Disabled/ Open Regatta at SPYC. Upon arrival at the Sailing Center early in the morning, I walked around the lot, scoping out the site. There was the usual milling about of sailors preparing their boats for competition. I could sense a high level of energy and excitement as before most competitive events. There were smiling faces all over the place. There were also lots of prosthetic limbs and wheelchairs.

One of the impressive sights was watching the competitors climbing in and out of their boats. They were cordial and gracious and grateful if you offered to assist them; they had a pretty good method figured out on how you could help, but they also seemed to know how to do it without your help and they were OK with that too.

Listening to them discuss different sailing situations, it was apparent that they had a superior knowledge of all aspects of the challenge known as sailboat racing. As racers know, the conditions of wind, waves, tides, boat, strategy, psychology and focus stay in steady flux during a race. I heard no blaming of bad air or bad equipment or blame of any outside force. (I have heard that at the local club sailing level where the bad results sometimes get blamed on bad air or bad equipment or bad luck, not the bad sailing.)

Instead, I heard talking of how they dealt with shifting winds, changing tides (especially at the start), and the challenging competitors. I also heard mention of aspects they wanted to find a plan of attack so they could master that task a little better next race. We could all learn a lot from these sailors.

Many of these sailors are hoping to qualify for the 2008 Beijing Paralympics. One of their challenges will be funding for boats, sails, repairs, travel, and whatever else is involved in an Olympic campaign. I get really uncomfortable with contributing to someone who whines about their plot in life, but I will be very excited to help support these athletes. I hope the whole sailing community will get behind these superb athletes. Submitted by Philip Andrews


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ISAF WORLD SAILING RANKINGS

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<td>Andrea Brewster</td>
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Lonely at the Top

15th Asian Games, Doha 5 - 12 Dec 2006

China’s Xu Lijia was the only woman sailing in the Laser Radial, but she beat all the men.

Singapore dominated the Laser finals, taking home two golds and a silver, to lift their Asian Games gold medal tally to five in the sailing competition at the 15th Asian Games.

The only two females in the open Laser Radial and open Laser 4.7 classes both won medals, becoming the first females to ever win medals at the Asian Games in their respective classes. China’s Xu Lijia won gold in the Laser Radial and Nurul Elia Anuar, Malaysia took bronze in the Laser 4.7 class.

Waleed Al Sharshani won silver in the Laser 4.7 and is Qatar’s first ever Asian Games sailing medallist.

In the open Laser Radial, after a difficult and very competitive regatta, Laser world champion Xu took China’s fourth gold medal in an open class, winning by two points.

In the men’s Laser standard class Singapore’s Maximilian Soh stormed home with the gold medal, winning by nine points. The battle for silver was very close between Japan’s Yoichi Iijima and Hokon Kim, Korea who covered each other for the whole race. Iijima placed third in the final race to win the silver medal. Defending Asian Games gold medallist Kim finished fifth to take the bronze and was visibly frustrated with his performance. Iijima, however was a very pleased sailor, taking his country’s 200 sailing medal.

In the Laser 4.7 class, Cheng Xinru Colin won Singapore’s second gold medal of the day. Cheng’s consistent sailing throughout the regatta paid off with all his races, bar two, concluding with top three finishes. He was well clear of the rest of the fleet, taking the gold medal with a 10-point margin.

Waleed Al Sharshani, the local boy from Qatar took silver in the 4.7, entering the history books as the first Qatari to win a medal in sailing at the Asian Games. Al Sharshani’s silver medal brings Qatar’s total medal tally to 24.

Nurul Elia Anuar from Malaysia, the only female in this class, took bronze, winning Malaysia’s second medal of the day after Rufina Tan won gold in the girl’s Optimist class. This is only the second time since the Bangkok Asian Games in 1998 that Malaysia has won multiple medals in sailing.

SURVIVAL CONTEST AT
ROLEX MIAMI OCR


Perfect conditions welcomed 183 sailors from 49 countries on the first day of racing at US Sailing’s 2007 Rolex Miami OCR. A steady southeasterly breeze and blue skies offered competitors a taste of what makes Biscayne Bay an ideal venue for this world-class event in its 18th year.

Australia’s Olympic bronze medallist Michael Blackburn lead after the second day, followed by fellow countryman Tom Slingsby, the runner-up at the 2006 Laser Worlds -- there is still enough elbow room for underdogs to learn from top dogs. “You can’t sail anywhere else against competition like this,” said the USA’s Kyle Rogachenko, a teenage college student ranked fourth on the US Sailing Team and currently in 32nd overall. “This year is definitely tougher because the top 20 world-ranked teams are here, but I’m still young and the 2012 Olympics are really my goal.”

The wind remained light the following day replicating the conditions expected in Qingdao, China for the 2008 Olympic Regatta. In fact, this event replicated the sailing format that will be followed at the Games: fleet racing held over multiple days and a final medal race on Saturday for the top 10 sailors in each class.

Mother Nature threw a nasty curveball at the sailors on day three. In addition to the usual need for tactics and boat speed, a certain level of toughness was required, as sailors battled a wide range of elements on Biscayne Bay. Even for elite sailors who train full-time in their pursuit of Olympic medals, conditions tested their survival skills.

The sun shone brilliantly and the winds blew 8-10 knots, providing a perfect wrap up for the competition.

There was a close race in the Laser Medal Race, where Tom Slingsby AUS started with a one point lead over Gustavo Lima POR. Whilst World Champion Michael Blackburn AUS took the bullet to secure the bronze medal, Slingsby and Lima were battling further down the fleet for gold. The Portuguese skipper won out to record his first victory in an ISAF Grade 1 event since winning the ISAF World in 2003.

In the Radial Class, Sari Multala FIN also took an unassailable lead into the Medal Race and took the Laser Radial title. Following on from handing Multala the title by going OCS in Friday’s final race, Gintare Volungeviciute LTU secured second with a win in the Medal Race, with Evi Van Ecker BEL taking the bronze. After being a leading light in the Europe over the past two Olympic quadrennials, victory in Miami is Multala’s first in the new Women’s One Person Dinghy equipment and a warning shot across the bows of the rest of the Laser Radial fleet.

Laser Standard
1) Gustavo Lima POR 80 pts
2) Tom Slingsby AUS 81 pts
3) Michael Blackburn AUS 86 pts
4) Matias Del Solar CHI 93 pts
5) Paul Goodison GBR 96 pts

Laser Radial
1) Sari Multala FIN 46 pts
2) Gintare Volungeviciute LTU 59 pts
3) Evi Van Acker BEL 82 pts
4) Anna Tunnicliffe USA 86 pts
5) Karin Soderstrom SWE 97 pts
Proposed Rule Change - Your Vote Counts!

Voting closes 15 November 2007
The following two proposed changes are considered minor and have no affect on performance. The rule changes have been passed by the World Council.

They are now referred to all members of the ILCA for acceptance.

The rule changes also have to be approved by the International Sailing Federation ISAF. In this process some minor re-wording can occur without changing the principle.

Only full paid class member votes will be counted.

Please take advantage of your right to be part of this democratic process. Your vote is important.

1. Rule 4 - Sail Registration Numbers and Identification
Add new rule:
4.(g)(i) Sails used in the following women’s events shall carry a red rhombus above the top batten pocket on both sides;
   a. world or regional (continental) championships
   b. events described as “international events” by the Notice of Race or Sailing Instructions
   c. other events that prescribe in the Notice of Race or Sailing Instructions that women competitors should be identified.

(g)(ii) The minimum size and approximate position shall comply with diagram “Rhombus”

(g)(iii) The rhombus may be retained for racing in other events.

EXPLANATION: The requirement of a red rhombus on the sail has been ILCA policy at world and continental championships for a number of years. Since the Laser Radial was selected as Olympic equipment Women’s Laser Radial sailing has dramatically increased. At large multi Olympic class regattas and at our own class regattas it is helpful for sailors and race committee to identify different fleets. The Red Rhombus makes it easy to identify between men’s and women’s Laser Radial fleets and also between women’s Laser Radial fleets and men’s Laser Standard rig fleets.

2. Rule 19 - Mast
Add new rule 19 (d):
(d) Flexible adhesive tape may be applied to the outside of the joint of the upper and lower mast sections to a limit of 40mm above and below the joint to prevent rotation of the mast sections at the joint.

EXPLANATION: The addition of flexible adhesive tape to the outside of the mast joint provides an easier way of keeping the mast collar rivet in the “neutral” axis. Without this rule change we have to rely on packing the inside of the collar. If the inside packing is too tight the collar can stick inside the lower mast making it difficult to separate the upper and lower sections and with the additional risk of weakening or breaking the mast collar rivet. If this happens the upper mast can collapse into the lower mast.

Vote on-line at www.laserinternational.org/rules2007 or fax/
post the completed form below.

Winning the Start
One of the most difficult aspects of sailing explained by Paul Goodison, get prepared and make sure you Win the Start from now on.

Whatever start I am making there are common rules and practises.
I am always alert as things can change quickly. Whilst I’m sailing up wind pre start I keep a check on the line bias by comparing my tacking angles to the line orientation.
In the last 30 seconds to the start, I try and keep level with boats around me so I don’t drop out of the pack, as it is difficult to get back in to the front row.
If I’m in doubt about being over the line I try and stay well covered, if I think I’m going to be over I’ll bail out as soon as possible as a bad start is much better than a no start due to an OCS.

Acceleration off the line
Getting off the line is crucial. It is possible to do all the pre start perfect and then not get off the line. This last bit is all down to timing and acceleration.

Use your boat handling skills to create a gap to accelerate into. The quickest way to accelerate is to pull the bow down to a reach, so you need a big enough gap to do this without infringing the boat to leeward.

Timing is the key to a good start; the last 20 seconds before the gun are crucial; at this point you need to have maximum concentration. The amount of time you require to create a gap and then accelerate varies on the wind speed and sea state.

At start time my boat is set up for the first beat except that my kicker is loose, stopping the boat from going forward when the mainsheet is out. It is also much easier to control and steer the boat. With about 10 seconds to go, just before I bear away, I pull the kicker on slightly to help acceleration. I then roll the boat to leeward. While pulling the boat flat I sheet in rapidly. Once the boat has accelerated up to speed I head up to a close-hauled course to hit the line at speed. In hilly conditions the bear away and acceleration should be powerful forcing the boat flat to accelerate.

The first 30 seconds after the gun is vital, it is all about competing against the boats around you so 100% of your concentration should be on boat speed, once you have popped out from your group it is time to start looking around and executing your first beat plan.

Strategy
Some considerations to make when planning your starting strategy are the quality of the fleet and its make up. The lower the quality of the fleet the easier it will be to win the favoured end. The make up of the fleet could have a huge effect on your starting strategy. In handicap racing the speed and manoeuvrability of boats can be very different, you don’t want to start next to a faster boat and be in dirty air immediately post start. The type of start also has implications on strategy. A black flag, z flag or round the ends start will need a different approach to normal starts.

You need to make sure that you have reasonable speed and sound boat handling to be able to approach the start with confidence. Once these skills are gained the decision making process should become a little more straightforward.

CLASS MEMBER RULES VOTING FORM 2007
Please complete and return to arrive before 15 November 2007 to:
ILCA, PO Box 26, FALMOUTH, Cornwall TR11 3TN, UK
or by fax to: +44 1326 318968

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<th>Proposal 1 - Red Rhombus</th>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal 2 - Mast Tape</td>
<td>YES / NO</td>
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</table>

For each proposal, please ENTER either YES or NO as appropriate.

Family Name ________________________________
First Name ________________________________
Address _____________________________________
Country _____________________________________
Email Address ________________________________
Membership Number ____________________________

www.laserinternational.org
It all started on Tuesday, November 14. I’d got up, put on the coffee and, while it was brewing, I strolled down the driveway to pick up the newspaper, The Sarasota Herald Tribune.

So there I was, sitting in the kitchen, scanning the news and drinking fresh coffee. Got through the comics then checked the classified ads to see if there were any 65/66 Mustangs for sale, real cheap, and then the sailboats for sale.

There it was “Laser for sale on trailer $400 firm...” What do I do? I could use a trailer and the boat might not be dog meat. But, I’ve already got three sailboards in the garage, a two year old Laser and a 21 foot power boat, not sure that Jocelyne thinks we need another boat!

“Humph, I see there’s a Laser for sale here for $400 and it’s on a trailer” I said, kind of optimistically. “So why don’t you buy it, you’ll get that back in charters this winter” was the reply (am I lucky to have a wife so understanding!).

I grabbed the phone, it was about 9 am, if this was any good it wasn’t going to be around long. No it wasn’t sold, got directions, jumped in the car and got there in 15 minutes. It was still there, not sold.

The hull was blue, faded and chalky from the sun with an off white deck. There were the three spars tied down on the deck, the trailer was kind of rusty and the tires were crackly all over. But the boat wasn’t in bad shape at first glance, a few scratches, no holes.

Let’s do this right, I thought, check the transom number, there wasn’t one, so it was an old boat. Check under the bow eye for the sail number, looks like 1416, yup it’s old alright, probably 72 or 73. Check the spars, they’re all straight. Check the deck, it’s stiff, really stiff, no kidding, no soft spots anywhere, great.

As I’m doing this the owner comes out. “Know anything about Lasers? he says. “Yeah, I’ve already got one. You want $400?” “Firm” he replies. “I’ll take it”. So we go into his office where I write a check and he gives me the title and trailer papers while telling me how he’s too old for a small boat. “If you’d better not tell him about masters sailing or he won’t sell it!” I also got the mahogany board and tiller, all the original lines that came with the boat and... wait a minute... I’m an Elvstrom sail... didn’t even have sail numbers on it.

We thanked each other, shook hands and I took off with the gear to get a trailer hitch put on the wagon.

An hour later I was back for the boat and had a big decision to make. The trailer wheel bearings were an unknown factor, do I head straight up I-75 at 60 mph or go around town slowly in the traffic? What the heck... I took the highway and was home in 15 minutes with my new toy.

The rest of that day was spent taking off all the fittings, washing it off, rubbing down the hull with rubbing compound then waxing it. Apart from some elbow grease a bunch of new fittings and lines the only major problem was that water came out of the bottom of the mast step nearly as fast as you could put it in the top. So we needed a little glass work.

Wednesday, the next day, I sent off for all the bits and pieces, which included three inspection ports to enable me to glass in the mast step and through bolt all the fittings. The rest of the day was spent sanding down the grab rails, centreboard and rudder and getting on the first coat of varnish as they hung from trees outside the house. The original rudder bolt was interesting, 1/8” diameter through a 1/4” diameter bushing in the wood, no wonder they changed that. By the time they were lightly sanded and had a second coat of varnish on the blades were starting to look great.

Thursday, the box of bits showed up, so I cut three holes for inspection ports with a jig saw. Old blocks of Styrofoam flotation inside, nice and heavy from water absorption at the edges, I knew I’d forgotten something, plastic water bottles for flotation. How do you get big blocks of Styrofoam through a 6” diameter hole, you don’t. You spend about two hours with a saw inside the boat, working with one hand. By the time you’re finished your knuckles are in great shape from hitting the edge of the hole in the boat. That’s enough for that day apart from putting another coat of varnish on the woodwork.

Friday, I bought some more supplies, fiberglass mat and resin to fix the mast step, a bunch of new stainless steel screws, nuts bolts and washers to screw down and through bolt all the fittings. Free advice... buy #10 x 1 1/2” screws and #10 x 2” bolts & nuts. Generally speaking they’re all too long, but who cares. If I’d have known that, I’d have saved another trip to the store!

I’d put one inspection port by the mast step in order to fix it. It’s a hoot trying to clean it up and glass it with one hand. Nevertheless I managed it and did a decent job, if I say so myself. The second port I’d put beside the centerboard slot in order to through bolt the hiking strap and mainsheet block fitting, which is loaded in tension when used. The third went on the deck under the tiller so I could through bolt the rudder fittings and hiking strap fairleads.

You’re probably asking yourself at this point what’s taking me so long. Well there’s other work to do with laser sailors phoning the office for information and me having to tell them the story of fixing my new old boat. Then the weekend was loaded with social functions. Friday evening the annual art auction for the Sarasota Sailing Squadron Youth Sailing Program which made about $3000 for the juniors, alright.

Saturday, I was race committee for the club regatta and Sunday I was best man at the Commodore’s wedding. All relatively unimportant matters compared to fixing your boat, I know, but Jocelyne likes this stuff, so I decided I should really go with her sooner than suffer extreme physical pain, plus the fact she might not say yes when I want to buy another boat!

Monday, I finished up. All new fairleads, aluminum cleats, Harken cam cleats, new hiking strap and a bunch of other stuff. Boy she looked really nice (the boat not Jocelyne!). I guess it was that night we rented Free Willy, an entertaining film about a kid that befriends a whale, everyday stuff. Anyway the kid liberates Willy the whale (which is probably what they would have called the movie thirty years ago, so much for modern marketing) and Willy gets a new lease on life. The point of all this is that I decided I might call the boat Willy, although I’m still undecided because I’m old fashioned and think boats should have female names. Apart from Willy, I like Simone, Marie Boudoir, of course Vinny the Blade isn’t bad either. It’s one or the other and I’m leaning toward Simone.

So what’s next... the trailer. The frames are solid but rusty, the tires are shot, the rims are rusty, the springs are broken and there’s no lights. Off we go to the trailer shop, new rims are cheap so buy new ones with tires on, new springs, new lights, nothing you can’t fix with a credit card. By dark I’d hit the frame with a wire brush in the electric drill to get off most of the rust, replaced the bearings, put the new springs on, replaced the axle and got a couple of coats of spray paint on it. It looked a lot better. The rest of my spare time that week went to making supports for the boat, and deck supports to hold the spars and enable me to double deck my other boat on top.

One thing here, how do you cut the correct hull curve in a piece of wood. You look up how to do it in Dick Tillman’s “Laser Sailing for the 1990’s”. By Saturday morning it was all done. 1416 looked really sharp, shiny blue hull sitting on a black trailer with white wheels and maroon carpet adding.

What’s left to do, go sail it. At the time of writing I haven’t done this yet, but I’ll do so soon.
Big Season and Record Entries

The 2007 season is well under way and once again we are seeing large turnouts in our major events especially at the top of our fleets.

In April the first big European Laser regatta of the season in the Europa Cup had a total of 325 Laser Standard, Radials and 4.7’s on the water at Andora in Italy. 2 weeks later in Hyeres, France a new Europa Cup record was set when 440 Lasers in the 3 fleets took to the water. This included 235 Laser Radials!

At the start of Olympic Class regattas in Europe the first two big events in Majorca and Hyeres saw the top sailors warming up for the 2007 ISAF World Championships scheduled for Cascais in Portugal in July. For some, these events were also part of the national qualification programmes to select sailors for Cascais.

Record number of countries for Laser and Laser Radial in Cascais

The 2007 ISAF World Championships is a quadrennial event combining the world championships of all Olympic classes at one venue. Laser and Laser Radial have the largest country participation of all the Olympic classes with 62 and 52 nations respectively. This is also a record at Laser World championships.

The ISAF Worlds are the major Olympic country qualifier. The number of sailors (athletes) at the Olympics are limited by the International Olympic Committee IOC to 400. The International Sailing Federation (ISAF) has to divide their total athlete entries amongst the 11 Olympic sailing events. The Laser has 40 country places and Laser Radial 26. 75% of these places will be qualified for in Cascais with the remaining 25% at the class 2008 World Championships.

Just to qualify a country is a major task and we can see that 22 countries will be disappointed in the Laser and a 26 in the Laser Radial.

ISAF Mid Year Meetings

By the time you read this the first steps will have been taken towards sailing in the 2012 Olympic Games. At the ISAF mid year meetings the discussions will have started on the procedures for selecting the events (single-handed, double-handed, male/female etc) and equipment (classes) for 2012. This is always a lengthy and complicated process with always a potential for a surprise. The first bridge ISAF has to cross is to decide the events. For 2012 the IOC has reduced sailing from 11 events to 10 so ISAF has to decide which event to drop. This decision will be made in November 2007 at the ISAF Annual Conference and could involve changes to several events. The equipment (classes) will be decided by ISAF a year later. On paper it seems quite simple but of course the choice of events can also determine which equipment will be used. You could not have a 470 selected as equipment for a single handed event!

Also at the mid year meetings discussion will start on the number of countries allowed for each class. Here the success of the Laser and Laser Radial should lead to an upward revision in the allocation of country places in the single handed events if ISAF’s goal of increasing country participation in the Olympics is to be achieved.

Details of the ISAF meetings and decisions can be found at www.sailing.org

Part of the work of the International office of the class is monitor and lobby for the class at these meetings and throughout the year to make sure that the interests of the Laser class are looked after.

At Club level

ISAF and the Olympics may be a long way off the radar screens of club sailors. However the success of the Laser at the highest level has a knock on affect at national and club level throughout world. Whilst most of the efforts and finance seems to be directed to the top sailors many countries are recognising that for the long term future Olympic sailors need to be developed and therefore investment in time and money in training in youth sailing is increasing. It is no coincidence that the leading Olympic sailing nations are also the ones with strong and established development programmes that encourage youth sailors. This is the big benefit for our sailors at all levels.

Laser 4.7 sailors are future Laser Radial sailors. Laser Radial sailors are may be future Laser Standard sailors!

Jeff Martin
PROFILE ON...  
MACIEJ GRABOWSKI

For Maciej Grabowski POL 2007 could be a defining year. After receiving funding from the IOC’s Olympic Solidarity Scholarship, the Polish Laser star starts the European season better prepared than ever, with Cascais and the ISAF Sailing World Championships firmly in his sights.

At 29 years old, Grabowski is a veteran of two Olympic Games, finishing seventh in Sydney and then 11th three years ago in Athens. He has an impressive track record including the European title in 2001 and the runners up spot last year. However, that European title and a 2003 win in Kiel aside, major titles have eluded him and his record at World Championships is surprisingly poor. Last year he finished the season off with an impressive fourth at the Olympic Test Event in Qingdao, before coming in 39th at the Laser Worlds in Korea.

With over ten years on the ISAF Graded Laser circuit, he is one of the most experienced hands in the fleet. In this Olympic campaign he will be looking to combine that experience and his talent with the extra training resources that funding from Olympic Solidarity provides, to take his sailing up that crucial final notch in his search for World and Olympic success.

Grabowski’s principal focus this year is on the ISAF Sailing World Championships in Cascais, Portugal. There his aim will be threefold: secure Olympic qualification for his country; build upon it and win the Polish title in 2007; and secure additional training resources that funding from Olympic Solidarity provides. ‘All that training paid off during the regatta. I was pleased with my performance in all conditions.’

An OCS in race 7 dented his medal hopes, although he still lay in second place overall after the first day of gold fleet racing. However, with the Medal Race approaching, a ‘huge mistake’ when he played the left side of the course for two beats and lost out to the majority of the fleet going right, left him with a 41 on his scorecard and ended any realistic chance of victory. He recovered well and a strong Medal Race left him just 22 points off the winning total of Gustavo LIMA POR.

Back To Miami
Following a short break after Miami, Grabowski switched his focus to the ISAF Worlds and the likely conditions in Cascais as he headed to Cabarete, Dominican Republic for two weeks of strong wind practice. ‘The place appeared to be even more beautiful than I was told with perfect sailing conditions for Laser sailing. Again we had a good group of guys, just to mention Matias Del Solar from Chile, Marc De Haas from the Netherlands, Jeremy Steyaert from France and a few others, so the training was very intense.’

With the Nortada in Cascais often bringing winds gusting up to 30 knots, ability in heavy airs is going to be crucial to success at the Worlds this year. For Grabowski, this period of training was ideal preparation, ‘I believe that, especially in terms of preparation for Cascais Worlds, Cabarete has a lot to offer to Laser and Laser Radial sailors. Incredible sailing conditions, wind ranging from 15 to 30 knots, huge waves, warm water and lots of sun is like a dream come true for a sailor. I wish I could go back some time soon.’

Palma Awaits
Since Miami and training in Cabarete, Grabowski took some time out of the boat to concentrate on preparing physically for the intense European season ahead. With the ISAF Grade 2 Princess Sofia Trophy now just a few days away, he is back on the water training in Palma de Mallorca, Spain for his second big test of the year.

Last year Palma proved a highlight for Grabowski as he secured a comfortable event victory with a second place in the Medal Race. He will be looking for more of the same in 2007, as he looks to refine his Miami performance, maximize the rewards his extra level of training has provided and launch himself towards glory in Cascais.

With thanks to ISAF for use of this article

www.laserinternational.org