



Race Week News

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Tim Long / TimWilkes.com

Tom Beery's J/35 *Man-O-War* (32193), from Mississippi, survived hurricane Katrina and sailed into a three-way tie for first place with two Beneteau 10Rs in Division 4-PHRF 3. Robert Oberg's *NKE Electronics* (53534) and Dave Curtis' *Manic* (53) vie for the prize in this fast-paced scramble. "The competition was excellent," says Beery.

Some Like It Hot

By Staff Writers

Anticipation was high as skippers and crews entered the field of play for the first day of Acura Key West 2007. The brilliant sunshine and shimmering water set the stage for new rivalries and the rekindling of old ones.

True to the tropics, Monday brought balmy breezes, clear skies and warm, but bouncy waters. Challenging a sailor's light air skills, the easterly breeze gradually lightened by early afternoon. Still, the blockbuster competition was intense as always, light air or not. Race Week's outstanding gathering of top players from around the world turned up the heat for the week to come. The leading Farr 40 world champion and Key West 2006 champ, *Mascalzone Latino*, owned by Vincenzo Onorato from Italy, is defending his title in this highly competitive class. Professional sailor from Great Britain, Adrian Stead, is calling the shots. "If you are a serious sailor, you never

want to miss Key West," Stead says. "The competition is always fantastic."

Division 1

Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark made his Key West debut in the talent-laden Farr 40 class and came away very impressed with the competition and conditions he found off the Conch Republic. An easterly breeze that held firm around 10-12 knots, enabled organizers to open the five-day regatta with two races for all 17 classes.

"This is a fantastic location for racing. The sailing conditions are excellent in every way with the great weather, stable winds and fairly flat water," Prince Frederik said.

Prince Frederick, 38, has been involved with competitive sailing for six years now, starting in the Dragon one-design class. This is the second season in the ultra

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competitive Farr 40 class for His Royal Highness, who acquitted himself well by placing ninth out of 17 boats in Race 1 on Monday.

"We have struggled with our speed in the past and finally today was the first time we were able to find that extra gear and stay with the lead boats," he said.

Volvo Ocean Race veteran Bouwe Bekking is calling tactics for Prince Frederik aboard *Nanoq*, which is the Eskimo word for polar bear. The crown prince blamed some tactical mishaps for a 13th place finish in Race 2.

Having been involved with such athletic hobbies as skiing, tennis and jogging, Prince Frederik has found sailing to be an ideal outlet for his competitive side.

"The fact I can sail only a few weeks out of the year and still have an opportunity to compete against the real rock stars of the sailing world is very exciting, a real adrenalin rush," he said.

One of the rock stars to which the prince was referring is Brad Butterworth, who has won the America's Cup three times in a row. Butterworth is serving as tactician aboard *Alinghi*, which seized the early lead in Farr 40 class with a first and a second on Monday.

Syndicate head Ernesto Bertarelli has four members of his America's Cup team aboard his Farr 40 for this regatta and an opposing skipper said *Alinghi's* crew work was impeccable.

The Melges 32 class, enjoying its second year in Key West, saw some hot action on Monday. Two bullets were earned by a brand new boat that raised plenty of eyebrows in the fleet. *Let's Roll*, Claudio Recchi's Italian entry, surely was on a roll. "We got a great shift of wind to the right," says Andrea Vigoni, mast. "The boat's very fast upwind and there's a good crew here." Aside from the favorable wind shift, *Let's Roll* simply did some fine sailing.

Glenn Darden's Texas entry, *Hoss*, didn't do too badly either posting a pair of deuces for the day. Crew Bruce Epke and the *Hoss* team shared their feelings on Race Week's first day. "We had better speed than starts. In general, upwind we thought we were as fast as anybody, if not as high as the Italians," says Epke. "Smooth is what it's about on a day like today."

Star, Jeff Ecklund's Florida entry, finished third. "The guys in first and second place were damn tough," said *Star* trimmer Hans Melges. "With the first day out for everybody, it's a matter of getting used to the conditions." Tactician Harry Melges agrees. "We tried a lot of different tactics, but they didn't work very well!" Harry said. "The Italians (*Let's Roll*) sailed very well and made few mistakes."

Tom and Steve Ripley's Melges 32 team, *Bad Fish*, from Maryland, were in high spirits despite an uncooperative halyard that forced them to drop out of race two. "We're looking forward to a good week," says Steve Ripley, enjoying his second year in Key West. "The race committee was awesome, the instructions were very clear and it was well organized."

Division 2

Numbers, a Carroll Marine 60-footer skippered by Dan Meyers of Newport, R.I., is the early pacesetter in IRC 1, which features the eight largest entries at Acura Key West 2007. Meyers has a star-studded crew that includes America's Cup and Volvo Ocean Race veterans

Hamish Pepper (tactician), Erle Williams (trimmer) and Jerry Kirby (bow).

"I'm fortunate to have a group of really good guys who all perform their jobs at a high level, which makes my job easy," said Meyers, who won Race 1 going away then tacked on a second in Race 2. "Hamish just won the Star Worlds so we're happy he joined the team. This is our first time sailing together, but our chemistry seems pretty good."

This is Meyers' 15th appearance in Key West and Monday's action provided a snapshot of why he keeps coming back.

"It would be difficult to find a nicer day for racing. The weather was beautiful and as usual the professional on-water organization was the highlight of the day," he said. "This committee always gets races off on time and runs square courses. It's good fair sailing."

John Kilroy is debuting his new Boltin & Carkeek-designed Transpac 52 in Key West and the early returns were positive. Volvo veteran Stu Bannatyne called tactics as Kilroy steered *Samba Pa Ti* to the early lead in IRC 2 with a first and a third.

"This is our first major regatta with this boat so we are still learning it. We're a little behind the curve, but we are certainly pleased with how we're progressing," Kilroy said. "We wanted this to be an all-around boat for doing a combination of offshore and buoy racing and seems to be performing the way we hoped."

One of the true legends of the sport celebrated his 70th birthday at Acura Key West 2007. Rod Johnstone is the founder and creative force behind J/Boats, a popular series of one-designs that comprise a whopping 31-percent of the 260-boat fleet. Johnstone is sailing on the J/120 *Loose Fish*, owned by John Niewenhaus of Sag Harbor, New York. Johnstone, who was delighted to become a septuagenarian on the opening day of Key West said, "This is the best place to go for sailing."

Division 3

Digging in and bounding forward like a barely controlled herd of stallions, the fleet of 33 J/105s was an impressive sight. *Convexity*, Donald Wilson's Illinois entry, came out on top at the end of Monday's salty stampede. "We had a really good start," Wilson said. "The left side of the course had better conditions, so we sailed clean and had good boat speed." He also attributes his lucky day to a brand new baby boy, Oliver, born just a day into the New Year. Congratulations Dad!

In second place, Bennet Greenwald's Californian entry, *Perserverance*, found their stride in race two, pushing past *Masquerade* by one point. Tied in third place with *Savasana*, Thomas Coates and the *Masquerade* team, used to strong San Franciscan winds, felt stymied by the flighty breezes on Monday. "The second race was especially shifty with pockets of air and vacuums. We just kept going into the vacuums!" says Coates. "We're just getting going and everyone's a little rusty."

Skipper Giovanni Maspero and crew aboard *Joe Fly* got off to a terrific start in Melges 24, largest class in the regatta with 47 entries. Helmsman Gabrio Zandona and tactician Daniele Cassinari were in sync throughout while the crew work was flawless.

"This was a very, very good day for us. It's fantastic to begin a major regatta such as Key West with a first

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and a second," Zandona said. "We had very good speed and the crew work was magnificent. Giovanni runs this program like an America's Cup and that organization showed today."

Division 4

Some days, every break seems to be going the right way. Monday was one of those days for John Edwards and his crew aboard the PHRF-5 Class J/29 *Rhumb Punch*.

On a day when light air ruled the water, a fresh crop of boats blew by traditional powerhouses in the PHRF classes. In the case of Edwards, his two first-place finishes left defending champion *Liquor Box* staring down a three-point deficit. But Edwards knows the light conditions which were so advantageous for his boat, can change just as fast as his lead can evaporate.

The same theme prevailed down Division 4 in PHRF-6, where Dam Romano's *Jazzy Jr.* jumped out to back-to-back first place finishes ahead of *En Charette* and *Caribbean Soul*. For the *Mariah 27* whose best finish in five years was a fourth place, he knows the perfect conditions won't continue, but will enjoy the view from the top for once. "In these conditions, we should be up there," Romano said. "I have been through here a lot and this is the first time out of the blocks doing well."

While *Jazzy Jr.* and *Rhumb Punch* bombarded the competition, the two other PHRF classes produced more even starts. *Man-O-War* (3,1), *Manic* (3,1) and *NKE Electronics* (2,2) share a three-way tie after Day One at 4 points in PHRF-3, while *As-if* used two second-place finishes to stay one point ahead of *Polar Express* and *L'Outarage* in PHRF-5.

With *Bad Boys* and *Dealers Choice* splitting race wins in a tight Corsair 28R Class, one of the most exciting individual races of the day actually came in the J/109.

In a tight run in which four different boats led at different times, Jon Halbert's *Vitesse* recovered after hitting a mark and having to do a 360-degree turn by shifting to the right position at the last moment and surged just ahead of *Tastes Like Chicken* for the win. The two are tied for the cumulative lead. "We were able to get to the right," *Vitesse* tactician Farley Fontenot said. "We were lucky to be in the right place at the right time."

Five boats are within three points in the class. One that Fontenot won't start thinking seriously about winning until Friday. "This class is very close. We need to start every race like it is our first," Fontenot said. "Our goal is to be mathematically able to win on the last day."

Writers Rebecca Burg, Paul Dehner and Bill Wagner contributed to this story.



The bowman sets the spinnaker aboard *Hiroshi* as the Italian Mumm 30 *Hiroshi* heads downwind during opening day action at Acura Key West 2007. Skipper Giulietti Armando and crew got off to a great start in their Key West debut – posting a pair of bullets to grab the early lead in the 10-boat class. *Hiroshi* accomplished quite a feat by winning the second race after being forced over the start line early.