



Race Week News

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The crew of *Excellent*, skippered by John Pollard of Great Britain, hikes hard over the rail during a windward leg of Race 3 on Tuesday. Close behind is *Rhino*, owned by Sean and Todd Scarborough of Ocean City, N.J. *Rhino* and *Excellent* stand 12th and 13th, respectively, in the 47-boat Melges 24 class after two days of racing. *Excellent* placed 13th in a 60-boat fleet at last year's regatta while *Rhino* is a new addition to the sport boat class.

Seizing Control

By Staff Writers

Once again, Acura Key West's world class racing teams made waves for the second day of intense competition. Ties were smashed and tables were turned. New leaders shook up the status quo seizing control of the lead, but the week is still young. Tuesday's saltwater showdown was a crucial day for skippers and crews.

Tuesday brought another beautiful day of racing with the international fleet enjoying sunny skies and 80 degree temperatures. Early forecasts for light winds were unfounded as Race 3 was held in a 10-12 knot breeze, which increased to 12-14 for the afternoon start.

The variable breeze added an extra challenge, forcing boats to battle with the ocean currents along with each other. A changing weather forecast could level the playing field in the remaining race days.

Division 1

Alinghi strengthened its hold on first in the Farr 40 as skipper Ernesto Bertarelli continued his impressive string of single-digit finishes in the loaded 17-boat class. Tactician Brad Butterworth made a crucial decision to help *Alinghi* win Tuesday's initial race and the Swiss team added a fifth in the second start to take a commanding 12-point lead over *Opus*, the German entry skippered by Wolfgang Stolz.

Alinghi, the current America's Cup holder, has shown no signs of weakness so far in compiling a low score of nine points – a tremendous total after four races. Bertarelli, Butterworth, jib trimmer Lorenzo Mazza, main trimmer Warwick Fleury and bowman Pieter Van Nieuwenhuyzen are the five members of the America's Cup crew here in Key West.

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Wednesday is Mount Gay Rum Day

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"We've only had two days of racing so it doesn't really mean much just yet," Bertarelli said. "I don't think there is any secret to what we are doing. We have been fortunate to get good starts, stay clear of the other boats and sail in clean air."

Alinghi benefited from hitting a wind shift en route to winning Race 3. Butterworth was ahead of the curve in terms of noticing the breeze was moving to the right side of the course and quickly put the Swiss boat in position to capitalize.

"Brad saw the shift coming from a long way away. I was surprised we were the only boat to catch it," Bertarelli said.

Italian entry Armando Giuliette and his Mumm 30, *Calvi Hiroshi*, smartly remained in the lead on Tuesday. A notable Key West player over the years, Deneen Demourkas and the Mumm 30 *Groovederci* team (Santa Barbara, CA) had to shake Monday's second place three-way tie with Peter De Ridder's *Mean Machine* (Monaco) and Bruce Eddington's Australian-based powerhouse, *Southern Sun*. Eddington smashed that close knit tie and slipped into second.

In the grab for third place, *Mean Machine* was thrown for a loop by a sixty degree wind shift and gave way to *TeamBOLD*, Nelson Stephenson's Southport, CT, entry. "It's really a tight fleet," observed Lee Schuckerow, *Black Seal's* bowman. "The best people come here." *Seal*, Kevin Young's Ohio entry, stepped up one notch on Tuesday. Crowd control on a Mumm 30 race course is, well, there is no crowd control. It's smack down, drag out, no holds barred series of exciting racing intensity.

Let's Roll has been equally impressive in the fledgling Melges 32 class, which has grown from eight boats in 2006 to 20 boats this year. Skipper Claudio Recchi and crew have gotten the gun in three of four starts and scored a mere six points after two days.

Let's Roll, which leads second place *Hoss* (Glenn Darden) by 10 points, was named City of Key West Boat of the Day.

"The Italians are very tough. They have great speed on all points of sail and their crew work has been exceptional," said Marty Kullman, co-owner of fourth-place *New Wave*.

Division 2

There were lead changes in the all three IRC classes on Tuesday. *Hissar* overtook *Numbers* in IRC 1, *Windquest* moved past *Magic Glove* in IRC 2 while *Esmeralda* jumped *Spirit of Malouen III* in IRC 3.

In the IRC-3 fleet, *Spirit of Malouen III* threw down the gauntlet. Monday's two bullets put *Spirit*, Stephane Neve's Sinergia 40 (France), into the lead until the tables were turned on Tuesday by Makoto Uematsu's Club Swan 42, *Esmeralda* (Seabornia, Japan). Tactician Ken Read shared a few of the team's impressions on the Club Swan 42, one of the new designs debuting in Key West. "Clearly, the boat's outliving its expectations." *Esmeralda* is now on top in the IRC-3 fleet with the solid gold improvement of earning two bullets on the second day. "So far so good," says Read. "It's a work in progress and we were probably a bit conservative on the first beat." In the second race, there were some

close calls when the mighty *Hissar* bore down on them in an unexpected wind shift. Skilled work on both boats kept everyone on the level.

Both Read and *Esmeralda* owner Makoto Uematsu were whisked into interviews by an ESPN camera crew as soon as the boat hit the docks. "I've sailed with Ken Read for twelve years," Uematsu says when asked about his rockstar team, clearly pleased their performance. He was also enthusiastic about the boat's performance and he liked the cruising features of this particular design. "I like cruising," Uematsu says with an easy grin. He plans to take the boat back to Japan, commenting on its perfect size and layout for his dual interests in both racing and cruising.

Yellow Jacket, an Annapolis Farr 40 entry by Bulman, Dennato and Scholz, remained stuck in third place. "On sailing against *Esmeralda*, you can't have any room for errors," said John Dodge, mast. The *Spirit of Malouen III* team had also put up a good fight. "The conditions were more difficult for us since our boat is optimized for ten to twenty knots," says skipper Stephane Neve. "But we know what we're here for and we're very happy with our results. We're sailing against professionals."

The close action in PHRF-1 kept everyone on a razor's edge. Charles Buckner's Texas entry 1D48, *BLUE*, started the week off on the right foot with three bullets in a row and a top place for both days. What do *BLUE's* rivals think? "They're just power all the time," says Don Nicholson, skipper/owner of *Drumbeat*, a New Jersey entry. "They look really well managed on the water." The second ranking boat in the class so far, *Beautiful World*, owned and helmed by frequent Key West flier Jeff Gale, hails from Hope Town, Bahamas. The Hope Town boys float just one point above a slam-bang three-boat tie. Ohio entry *Spaceman Spiff*, Robert Ruhlman's 1D35 and Pete Hunter's *Wairere* from North Carolina settled into a third-place tie with *Plowhorse*, Robert Hesse's 1D35.



Spirit of Malouen III's amateur team includes a doctor, a sports teacher, a salesman and a home builder. It's *Spirit's* first Key West Race Week although owner Stephane Neve is a frequent sight at European regattas.

The racecourse thrill ride was a dramatic squeeze when a much taller TP52 slid right near *Spaceman's* stern on the last mark. Trimmer Ryan, Robert Ruhlman's son, summed up that day. "It's close!" Robert's wife Abby crews in the hot box and the gang is glad to be back in



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Key West after a six-year absence.

There's been extremely tight racing in PHRF 2 with Bill Hanckel steering his J/120 *Emocean* to a narrow lead over *Endorphin* and *Cash Flow*. *Emocean* notched its second bullet on Tuesday and now has eight points – four better than Erik Wulff's Bashford & Howison 36. "*Emocean* and *Cash Flow* both sailed very good today so hats off to them. Today was a challenge for us since we are a heavier displacement boat," said Wulff, who holds second by just one point. "There is such a small (rating) spread in this class it's almost like sailing one-design. The competition is fierce, which is what we wanted. If it's not tough, it's not fun."

Division 3

The top guns in the huge J/80 class didn't have it easy keeping each other at bay. Kerry Klingler's Larchmont, NY entry, *Lifted*, won Monday's round and kept on rolling with another first place. "It was a trying day," Klingler admits, describing the challenges of avoiding Tuesday's holes and staying in the breeze. Still the *Lifted* team found its groove and Klingler is thrilled to be back in Key West. "It's a wonderful break from New York this time of year!" *Rumor*, John Stork Jr.'s Huntington NY entry, remains in second with Bill Rose's *Kicks* in a close third. *Le Cluster*, Walter Caldwell's Texan entry, was graced by an escort of a pod of dolphin for their first jab at Key West Race Week. "The winds were too light, but it was great," says Caldwell. Crew Terri Gale agrees. "The winds were hard to predict," she adds. Caldwell races with wife Beverly and a mostly female crew dubbed

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Pete Hunter's Thompson 30 Wairere started the week with a DSQ in race one, rebounding with a pair of third-place finishes, and a bullet in race four. The turn of fortune now places Wairere in the mix of a 3-way tie for third place in PHRF-1.

"Wally's Angels".

Mark roundings can get pretty hairy in the J/105 fleet. The competitive group saw a tie-breaking shuffling of rank, which only ended up creating another two-boat duel in the class. This time, it's a tie for first place with Donald Wilson's *Convexity* and Tom Coates's *Masquerade* on the line. In the top five, the *Gumption 3* team sums up the day—“Everyone's basically head for head with speed.” In the midst of the flock, Californian entry *Grace O'Malley*, skippered and owned by Alice Leahey, enjoyed a rise in the ranks by the end of Tuesday. “You just never know what you'll find when you come here,” Leahey says.

That sailboat battle bonanza, the Melges 24 fleet, saw a radical shuffling of points so far. With the exception of *Joe Fly*, Giovanni Maspero's Italian entry. Helmsman Gabrio Zandonà and tactician Daniele Cassinari continued to show exceptional chemistry as *Joe Fly* posted a first and a third on Tuesday to bring its point total to seven. *Blu Moon*, a Swiss boat skippered by Franco Rossini, is a distant second with 21 points despite having posted a pair of seconds in four races.

“In reality, the gap is not as great as it seems. All the races have been close,” Zandonà said. “Our starts and downwind speed is giving us a slight advantage. When you are in front from the beginning and don't make mistakes, it's tough for the competition to catch you.”

Division 4

In Corsair 28R, rivalries have developed over years of competing against the same crews at event after event. After Day 2 at Acura Key West 2007, those old rivalries officially flared up once again.

On a day Bob Harkrider of *Bad Boys* defined as a “screacher day,” you either had one, or you fell behind. Harkrider didn't fly it, Steven Marsh did. That made all the difference as *Dealers Choice* dealt itself pocket aces Tuesday and left the *Bad Boys* with two deuces. The two have known each other for about six years, just as long as both have been coming to Key West, and Tuesday, Marsh, along with Todd Hudgins, got the best of its familiar counterparts.

“We hope there will be deep enough competition that we are not racing against one other boat. We hope that doesn't happen, but after today appears it might.”

That's thanks to the screacher that blew *Dealers Choice* to a six-point cumulative lead. The screacher, which holds a bigger sail area, allowed Marsh to punch through the waves more than if using their jibs.

On the weather laps, *Dealers* gained 8 to 10 boat-lengths on its *Bad Boy* rivals.

“For us, we feel like the screacher was a big part of what helped us out,” Marsh said.

“It is a good sail for that condition. Since it has been pretty breezy, its also been pretty lumpy. The winds have gone down but with it being bumpy the screacher gives us more horsepower.”

With heavier air expected to return today, Harkrider knows the competition is just beginning. Unfortunately,

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after a first day that began with a first place and ended with a disastrous 7th place, no room for air exists in the nine race series that drops the worst finish.

“We warmed up on the second race,” he said. “You would like to use your muligan on the ninth race and pack the boat up, but it doesn't work that way. Also, with [*Dealers Choice*] having two good races, being a good sailor and getting around well, hopefully we won't get hung out to dry with another 7, otherwise we'll be dead meat.”

Elsewhere in Division 4, *As-If* spliced together two victories a day after two second-place finishes. Jeff Kitterman and his fun-loving crew now hold a five-point lead and won't even pretend it was due to perfect execution or strategy.

“We were very lucky,” he said. “There is a thing called Karma. We are trying to keep him on our side. I don't know if it will continue to be or not, but we aren't changing anything.”

Don't look for skipper Bobby Oberg and his crew aboard *NKE Electronics* to be doing much tinkering, either.

Oberg and his Annapolis-based crew have put together a fine performance in grabbing the lead in PHRF-3. They have been pointing toward this regatta for several months and that preparation shows as the Beneteau 10R has won two races and placed second in the two others.

“We've been working on putting together this crew since June. This is the goal we've been pointing toward all season. We wanted to come down here and have a good regatta,” said Oberg, who has Matt Beck of North Sails-Chesapeake aboard as tactician.

NKE Electronics is one of five Beneteau 10R one-designs that were launched last spring. *Manic*, skippered by Craig Sheard of South Dartmouth, Mass., is tied for second place just three points behind her sister ship. “We came down here to get the word out about the boat and it's encouraging that it's performing well out on the race course in a tough fleet,” said Ken Comerford, skipper of *Moon Racer* and a representative of Annapolis Yacht Sales that is the primary East Coast dealer of the Beneteau 10R.

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