



# Race Week News

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Andy Newman / Florida Keys News Bureau

Flash Gordon leads a nicely organized parade of Farr 40s on a spinnaker run on Thursday. Skipper Helmut Jahn and crew closed to within seven points of week-long leader *Alinghi* after Wednesday's action, but could not keep the pace. *Alinghi* added another bullet to its impressive series score and has clinched overall victory in the 17-boat fleet.

## On The Line

By Staff Writers

**E**arly morning, in the pastel glow of a tropical sunrise, life in funky Key West slowly came into swing. A man dressed like a pirate rode a scooter past a row of schooners on the waterfront. Camera-toting tourists stared at pelicans and the pelicans stared back. It was just another day in paradise. A passerby stopped and gazed at the motionless race boats that were tied to the docks. He commented over his Cuban coffee, "They're so calm and peaceful sitting there, but very soon, they just go nuts!" Indeed! All four divisions enjoyed their share of thrills, action and drama. Class leaders drove ahead with clean boat handling and smooth roundings, ensuring the win in more than one class. For others, victory is still on the line.

A mild sea breeze and warm sunshine were the flavors of the day for all divisions. Moderate sea states allowed for some great starts and dazzling finishes.

### Division 1

Skipper Ernesto Bertarelli steered *Alinghi* to its fourth victory of the series on Thursday to clinch overall victory in Farr 40. The team from Geneva, Switzerland holds an insurmountable 20-point lead over *Flash Gordon 5* in the 17-boat class.

*Alinghi* does not need to leave the dock on Friday, but tactician Brad Butterworth said the team is inclined to go out on the water one last time.

"We came here to go sailing so why not do as much as we can," Butterworth said. It would be nice to end the regatta on a good note. I guess we'll see what the boss thinks."

Bertarelli came to Key West with five members of his America's Cup crew, figuring warm and sunny Florida would provide a nice break from preparations to defend

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Friday is Acura Day



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the Auld Mug. Butterworth praised the trimming of Lorenzo Mazza and Warwick Fleury and said Pieter Van Nieuwenhuyzen is such a good bowman "it's like having two guys up there."

However, six other members of the crew were not professionals – per class rules – and had to blend in with the Cup sailors. "This crew had never sailed as a group so we weren't sure how it would go. It turns out we worked very well together," Butterworth said.

While the boys on *Alinghi* can relax tomorrow, the intensity will be high in most of the other professional-laden, grand prix classes.

*Southern Sun*, the Australian entry skippered by Bruce Eddington, took over the lead in Mumm 30 class with a strong performance on Thursday. Tactician Tim Davis

were all very tough," said Recchi, who is a whopping 17 points ahead of *New Wave*, co-owned by Michael Carroll and Marty Kullman.

"This guy" *Let's Roll* owner Claudio Recchi said, clapping team mate Federico Michetti on the shoulder, "has been responsible for the victory." Recchi goes on to credit his entire team of close friends for their sensational sailing. "The tactics of *Gabriele* were excellent," *Let's Roll* crew has agreed to go sailing on Friday because Recchi is hopeful of earning the Acura Boat of the Week honor.

## Division 2

Dan Meyers stood on the dock in front of the Westin Hotel and simply shook his head when asked how close



Veteran sailmaker Ken Read (helm) came to Key West planning to use the regatta as a shakedown of sorts for *Esmeralda*, the newly-launched Club Swan 42 owned by Makoto Uematsu. Read is somewhat stunned the German Frers design leads IRC 3 after placing first or second in every race. "The boat has out-performed all expectations," said Read.

made some great calls on wind shifts as *Southern Sun* posted a first and a second to take a four-point lead over *Mean Machine*. That effort also earned *Southern Sun* the Industry Partner Boat of the Day award.

"I think Tim is an exceptional tactician and that has been evident this week. He's called the shifts very well and has gotten us out of jail a number of times," Eddington said. "Tomorrow is a big day as we know anything can happen in sailboat racing. Our worst result so far is a fifth so that is encouraging. We just can't make any major mistakes."

Claudio Recchi and his Italian team aboard *Let's Roll* clinched victory in Melges 32 class with a first and a second on Thursday. Crew member Topo DiCaprio got tossed in the water upon return to the dock and it was smiles all around for Italians, who dominated a very strong 22-boat fleet on the strength of four bullets.

"We are quite pleased because the top five boats

the competition has been in IRC 1 class.

Meyers and his crew aboard *Numbers* have engaged in a battle royale with Edgar Cato and the *Hissar* team with the two Farr-designed 60-footers sailing around the course in constant contact.

"It's been absolutely fantastic racing. We have battled back-and-forth all week and we have to do it one more day," said Meyers, who steered *Numbers* to a pair of bullets on Thursday to take a two point lead over *Hissar*.

Those victories didn't come easy as Cato was breathing down the back of his Newport (R.I.) neighbor all the way to the finish. "These two boats are incredibly even. They go the same speed and have similar caliber crews. We had a race today in which the lead changed hands twice in the last 60 seconds."

IRC 1 is among 12 classes still in doubt going into the final day of Acura Key West 2007, presented by Nautica. Organizers with Premiere Racing are planning to start



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one race on Friday and it will be do or die for Meyers and many other skippers.

"It's all on, winner-take-all. There's nothing better than to have a great regatta like this go right down to the wire," said Meyers, who did not hesitate when asked what *Numbers'* approach will be in the ninth and final race. "For us, it's two words: Sail clean. We can't worry about *Hissar* or any other boat. We just have to sail the best we can and let the chips fall where they may."

Only two points separate the first and second place boats in IRC 2 and 3 as well. *Tastes Like Chicken* and *Current Obsession* are only one point apart in J/109.

*Magic Glove*, Colm Barrington's brand new Ker 50, will try to protect a narrow advantage over the Transpac 52s *Samba Pa Ti* (John Kilroy) and *Windquest* (Doug DeVos).

"It's anybody's regatta at this stage. Three boats are still very much in the hunt," said Barrington, an Irishman making his Key West debut. "We've really got to sail our own race because our rating is so much different than the Transpacs. We've looked at the numbers and considered all the scenarios. We know what we have to do, now we just have to go out and do it."

*Esmeralda*, a newly-launched Club Swan 42 owned by Japanese industrialist Makoto Uematsu, has finished first in five races and second in three others yet still only leads *Spirit of Malouen III*, 9 to 11. Tactician Ken Read said *Esmeralda* can't let up now, although this regatta has been a success regardless.

"We came into this regatta with the plan of learning the boat and getting it set up properly. We had no expectations results-wise, so this is a pleasant surprise,"

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said Read, a North Sails executive. "We have some specially-designed IRC rocket ships in this class while we're set up completely in one-design trim. It appears this is a one-design that the IRC rule likes."

Genesis Racing's Farr 40 from South Carolina, *Sister Golden Hair*, returned to the docks in a jovial mood. "We love it down here," Warner said. "This is as good as it gets." Ben Poucher, foredeck, was taking a good-natured ribbing about the new nickname the team has awarded him. "We're calling him Hansel!" Ben couldn't help but to laugh.

In PHRF-1, Wednesday's second place tie breaker between the Thompson 30, *Wairere*, and *Spaceman Spiff* was nothing short of sensational. *Wairere* scored two



Tim Wilkes / TimWilkes.com

Let's Roll, an Italian entry skippered by Claudio Recchi, enjoyed a magnificent week in the rapidly-growing Melges 32 class. Recchi, who only recently took delivery of his new boat, won five of eight races en route to posting a low score of 10 points.

bullets moving into first overall. "We've sailed smart, played the wind shifts and tried not to break anything," says owner Peter Hunter, who's raced in Key West for fourteen years. "The lighter breeze has definitely worked in our favor." Tactician Simon Dickey called the shots. "It's been very even between the 1D35's and us," Dickey said.

Defying gravity, Robert Ruhlman's Ohio based 1D35, *Spaceman Spiff*, has landed into another second place tie break. This time it's with Charles Buckner's Texas entry *BLUE*. "It's a very challenging fleet," says *Spaceman's* Ruhlman. "*Wairere* locked it up and *Drumbeat* and *Electra* got into it today. We've really enjoyed it." Ruhlman's boat is inspired from his favorite comic strip, Calvin and Hobbs. The team had a few hair raising moments when two dueling Swan 601s squeezed around *Spaceman Spiff* on the course.

On Wednesday, *Hell Hound*, Brendan Brownyard's 1D35 from Oyster Bay, NY, faced a third place tie-up with Jeff Gale's Bahamian entry, *Beautiful World*. Gale is now involved in a two-way tie for third with Robert Hesse's 1D35, *Plowhorse*.

The Italian-built CrossCurrent 33, *Electra*, is the first boat of her kind racing in America. The *Electra* team is getting a solid feel for the silvery, high tech sport boat's characteristics and Key West is an ideal opportunity to shine. "We couldn't ask for a better venue," says owner Craig Crossley, from Rhode Island. His son, Vincent, is bowman.

It's north versus south as the drama continues to unfold in the PHRF-2 class. Lloyd Griffin's J/120, *Cash Flow*, is dominating with three bullets so far and flawless starts. "It's a really tough class," said Ken Saylor, tactician. Saylor's raced at every Key West but one. From North Carolina, the *Cash Flow* team enjoys a tough but rather friendly rivalry with the *Emoccean* crew and they race against each other in various venues. "We're looking at this as unfinished business," Saylor says with a sly grin.

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"We just got to go out and race our ace," says Bill Hanckel, owner of the South Carolina entry *Emocean*. "We had great crew work from the very beginning." First in class on Wednesday, *Emocean* placed second in class on Thursday and leads the J/120 subclass. Last year's Key West champ, *El Ocaso*, Rick Wesslund's J/120 from California, led the first two marks in race one then ended up in the air turbulence of a traffic jam. "It's pretty impressive that *Emocean* has been able to do so well against the lighter boats. And *Cash Flow* deserves to be where they are," said Bill Melbostab, *El Ocaso*'s tactician. Ranking mid-fleet and with only one more day to go, the team is in good spirits "Hey, we're going to try to win the race!" Melbostab said.

## Division 3

The extreme J/80 machine, *Lifted*, had set the trend early on and was able to play keep-away with John Storck Jr's two-bullet earner, *Rumor*, and *Emotional Rescue*. Kerry Klingler's elusive *Lifted* team packs three bullets so far. Magnus Tyreman's Swedish entry, *Emotional Rescue*, takes third on Thursday with Kristen Robinson's *Angry Chameleon* in fourth. With seven points in the lead so far, will it be a slam dunk for the *Lifted* team? Stay tuned, one more day will tell all.

*Willy T*, Jan Smeets entry from Larchmont, NY, is racing Key West for the first time. "It's been delightful all along. We've had very sailable breezes," says helmsman Paul Lennon. The easy-going crew was soaking up the Key West sun. "I'm very pleased," Lennon said.

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*Convexity*, skippered by Donald Wilson of Chicago, made a major move in the 33-boat J/105 class – cutting a 19-point deficit to *Masquerade* down to four. Wilson placed second in Race 8 while Thomas Coates and the *Masquerade* crew suffered a 24th in Race 7 to tighten the standings.

"I definitely feel we have a good chance to win the regatta. We are right there with *Masquerade* in terms of boat speed," Wilson said. "We will try to continue do the same stuff we've been doing and see what happens."

*Gumption 3*, owned by Noelle and Kevin Grainger of Rye, NY, moved into third place on Thursday after earning a bullet in race seven. "We've been working hard to get in front of *Masquerade*," says Kevin. The light and fluky winds were an advantage to *Gumption* at that moment. The team is just ten points shy of *Masquerade* and one more day can make a dramatic difference.

## Division 4

In PHRF-4, *Esse*'s two bullets on Wednesday won them rousing accolades under the big top. APY Syndicate's *Esse 850* from Annapolis, MD, improved by leaps and bounds as the brand new boat quickly settled into the Key West groove. "We're in a head to head race with *As-If*," says trimmer Rick Hamilton. The tack trading ballet has been intense so far. "If *As-If* can catch us on the gybe, he'll camp on our wind," Hamilton explains. Trading tacks all

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over the race course, Jeff Kitterman's Texas entry fell for a fast one when *Esse* faked a gybe, causing *As-If* to twitch off guard.

In the J/92s subclass, Jeff Johnstone's *Polar Express* is the locomotive with a 20-plus point lead over Robert Turner's *Cool Change*.

After two years of busted masts and blown bulkheads, Dan Romano was due for some good luck. It has finally come in form of four straight days of light wind.

Now if Romano and the rest of his crew aboard the PHRF-6 *Mariah 27 Jazzy Jr.* can pull out at least third place finish today, they will earn their first championship in five trips.

But with defending champion *Island Flyer* taking the first race Thursday, the two boats find themselves in a head-to-head showdown.

*Jazzy Jr.*'s *Mariah* moves well in the light air which has accompanied Key West all week, whereas Denny Manrique's S2 7.9 *Flyer* can withstand the heavy winds and bury Romano. It could very well take one more bit of luck with the weather to deliver Romano's title.

"We will try to pull it off," he said. "We'll see what happens. When the wind picks up they get me. Every time they got me this week was heavier wind."

One of those times was the first race Wednesday where Romano said he made some mistakes en route to a third-place finish. Just his second time not finishing in the top two.

"We couldn't get the boat to move," he said. "It wasn't trimmed right. We set up for light and it began to blow. We didn't make the right adjustments."

For all the good luck Romano has enjoyed this week, though, *Island Flyer* is left frustrated with its bad breaks Thursday.

Manrique and company were playing tag for first and second place in the second race and on the verge of causing a tie for first overall when the *Flyer* picked up a crabpot on the rudder.

Their disappointing third place finish will force a victory today.

"It can happen," Manrique said. "Right now we will definitely need a bullet. If we can, we will. We came down here to win."

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