



The Audi Oman Hobie 16 National Championships

16th / 17th September 2004

Well what a couple of weekends!

After the frustrations of the previous weekend of sailing, The Audi Oman Hobie 16 National Championship started in great gusto on Thursday morning 16th September with the previous weekend's 10 pre-qualified teams keen to challenge the open visitors (one of which travelled down from Dubai). In all a 14 boat fleet was ready for action, the wind steadily filling in from the North West.

The competitors attended the mandatory registration, weigh in (to ensure that are within the class limitations) and the Race briefing by the Officer of the Day (OOD) who explained the Sailing Instructions and the course details. By 1015 the boats were rigged and ready for the start at 1100. At 1030 the all too familiar tune from the previous weekend of Simple Minds playing 'African Skies' echoed around the bay as a signal for the teams to head out to the start area.

Nine races were planned for the weekend. This concentration of numerous races severely tested the competitors and their boats for their reliability and consistency.

Day 1

Race 1 and Race 2 were held back to back, the competitors and the Race Officers keen to complete the scheduled races. Both Race 1 & 2 had eager and nervous competitors on the start line with several individual recalls for starting early and one general recall which meant the whole fleet had to return to the start area and restart with the same long 5 minute countdown sequence.

Race 2 also produced the first and only two capsizes of the weekend, Dave Clark / Safia Salim Al Habsi and Chris Graham / Yousef Lahej. These spectacular feats were complimented during the Audi sponsored evening meal when the Hobie agent for The Gulf, Mike White of ULO presented these competitors with the sailing equivalent of wooden spoons - rash vests and sailing gloves to both teams.

The leaders after the first two races were:

Victoria Grainger / Chuck Heller with a first and second, a total of 3 points,
Bob / Judy Gardham with a second and first, a total of 3 points,



Rob Nieuwenhuijs / Greg Adams (Race 1 & 2 only) / Marie Dedden with two thirds, a total of 6 points.

During the lunch break the wind steadily increased to 10 – 12 knots which was idyllic weather for twin wiring up the beat and surfing down the waves downwind. The whole fleet gradually settled into the racing which became closer and closer. Each mark rounding was subject to close scrutiny of each boat's rights as they approached and rounded. Several very loud screams of "starboard", "inside overlap – give me room to round" or very plainly some times "you have no rights" where heard!

Race 3 was tight all the way round the course however some very interesting inside moves by Tony / Eric Van Thiel saw this father and son team secure their best place of the Championship with a well deserved third place.

Race 4 of the day saw the only black flag start of the weekend, this flag is the real test of a competitor's nerves. If you are an early starter you are automatically disqualified from that race and 15 points are added to your score! (lowest point scorer wins!) Luckily for all competitors the fleet got away clean, the impressive performance in Race 3 by the visiting Dubai Team Chris Graham and Yousef Lahej with a second place was unfortunately short lived for them in Race 4 and 5, with an 8th and a 'did not start', their championship hopes where beginning to unravel.

Again the dark horse competitors where beginning to emerge to the fore, Klaus Mueller / Jane Nicolson who have only just teamed up for this event, held a commanding lead from the start in Race 3 and promptly romped home to the most convincing win of their entire weekend.

Race 4 saw Victoria / Chuck tactically manoeuvre their way around the course to secure 1st place followed by Klaus / Jane. Angus / Stephen the second of the Championship father and son teams battled their way through the middle of the fleet, unfortunately for Angus on the helm his rudders where generating an enormous amount of weather helm which he later corrected, but even with this disadvantage he posted his best place of the Championship with a ninth place.

The last 3 races of the day where held back to back, tough, and gruelling for some competitors but the majority stayed on the course and stiffened their resolve, attacking the start line. Several suicidal 'port tackers' carved their way through the fleet looking for the inshore lifts as they approached the Ras Al Hamra Bay.

Race 5 was an intriguing mid fleet battle where the physical demands of the day where beginning to take their toll, however three teams placed the best results for the Championship in this race, Bernard Grossouvre / Barrie Wiltshire in fourth, Torstein Smenes / Andy Marris in sixth and Joe / Kirsten Cumming with a tenth.



The overnight leader board was as follows:

Victoria Grainger / Chuck Heller: 1st, 2nd, 7th, 1st, 3rd = 14 points gross, 7 points net
Bob / Judy Gardham: 2nd, 1st, 6th, 5th, 1st = 15 points gross, 9 points net
Klaus / Jane: 7th, 4th, 1st, 2nd, 7th = 21 points gross 14 points net

Day 2

With four races left, the competitors were rewarded with a near perfect 10 knots of Northeast wind, which if true to form would freshen during the course of the day to provide some exhilarating twin wire sailing.

The course was laid by 0930 and the planned 1000 start for Race 6 was on. The fleet departed to the start line and waited in anticipation to see the course type. A C3 was declared by the Race Officers on the water, 3 circuits of windward / leeward configuration, approximately 45 to 50 minutes of sailing to endure per race!

At the start gun the fleet was cleanly away for Race 6, 7, & 8.

Race 7 and 8 were prone to some very tactical wind shifts on the course and with the set of an anticipated current from west to east across the bay, several teams factored in these natural forces, in particular two teams perceived the shifts / currents to their best and placed their best result of the Championship, Race 7 for Frank van Beek / Mark Newell with fourth and Race 8 for Frans Tettero / Daan Tettero the third and final father and son team with a fifth place.

However for Race 9, the individual recall flag was raised and an unknown number of boats had started early in the adrenalin rush to achieve their best result to lower their overall aggregate score. Nerves were showing and on shore the computations were on going, the top 3 teams of Victoria / Chuck, Bob / Judy and Klaus / Jane would see the place for Championship decided on their actual finishing places relevant to each other for this last race of the Championship. In the mayhem of the start, Victoria / Chuck had indeed started early and were obliged to return to the start. Trying hard to finish the day on a high, Dave / Safia shot off the line very quickly and a glance back by Dave to the start boat created an individual recall dilemma. Where they over the line or not?! A perfect start and away in first place or the risk of being scored as On the Course Side (OCS which carries 15 points) or stop, return to the start and restart, it is up to the individual team to decide. Dave / Safia chose the cautious approach and return to the start. As they pass the committee boat, the do or die question of hand signals to the race officer, "Were we early?"

Unfortunately for Dave / Safia they had in fact started correctly and need not have returned to the start, their Trophy hunt was over.



Meanwhile on the course the battle between the three top teams intensified, each team trying to cover the other, gain that little advantage, metre by meter, one team would go left up the beat the other two would go right, and then vice a versa on the downwind leg, then the break, Klaus / Jane and Victoria / Chuck go offshore on the last beat and Bob / Judy go inshore, who will be in the lead at the top mark? At this stage Klaus / Jane have the lead followed by Victoria / Chuck with Bob / Judy in third.

On the beach the Mike White the event OOD offers a running commentary of each team's progress, at the top mark Klaus / Jane rounds first, hotly pursued by Victoria / Chuck and Bob / Judy on the final run down anyone of these three can win the Championship on the last leg of the last race.

Several tactical gybes are thrown in, each team counteracts each others manoeuvres as they progress downwind, looking for that elusive wave to surf that little extra to gain distance on one another. As they approach the finish line, Klaus / Jane hold onto their lead and take a first, closely followed by Victoria / Chuck and then Bob / Judy. The rest of the fleet follow so close on their heels and a very aggressive sail by Volker & Sabine Varenhkamp results in their best place of the Championship as they finish in fourth place.

As the fleet heads for the beach for the last time, the familiar tune of 'Praise him' by Fat Boy Slim greets the incoming boats and all the teams finish within a few minutes of each other The racing over the weekend was the closest of any regatta held at the club.

With the race officers checking the scores, cross checking their maths and awaiting the potential of any one of the 14 teams to post a protest the final result was eagerly anticipated by all.

Each team declared that had no protest to lodge and there it was, Audi Oman's first Hobie 16 National Championship concluded, with a worthy wining team of Victoria Grainger / Chuck Heller.

On the beach, the trophy table was prepared with Audi Oman trophies, the top three places are annual revolving trophies, with 4th to 6th recognised with pewter mugs.

The Prize ceremony was hosted by the Ras Hamra Sailing Section, sailing Captain Volker Varenhkamp, he thanked all the teams for the active and gamesmanship sailing attitude throughout the event and praised the principal OODS, Roger Nickells and Vincent Hengst and their team of Race officers for their dedication and resolve to achieve the championship goal to complete nine races in two days. This event would also have not been possible without the regular and reliable support of the club's three boat bosuns, Martin, Murrilli and Qhalil.



Volker then invited the Sponsors Audi Oman / Wattayah Motors senior delegates, Mr Ibrahim Zadjali Audi Brand Manager Oman, and John Arnold General Manager Audi Oman / Wattayah Motors to present the trophies.

Audi Oman presented the following trophies:

2004 Hobie 16 Champions: Victoria Grainger / Chuck Heller

Runners Up: Klaus Mueller / Jane Nicolson

Third: Bob & Judy Gardham

Fourth: Dave Clark / Safia Salim Habsi

Fifth: Rob Nieuwenhuijs / Anne Marie Dedden (Race 1 & 2 Greg Adams)

Sixth: Frank Van Beek / Mark Newell

The best placed Youth from the prequalification round: Greg Adams / Roger Merzian.

David Clark

Catamaran Sailing Captain

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