

1997 OOCL Etchells World Championship

Preface

Sophia Høj-Jensen

The Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club hosted the OOCL Etchells World Championship, November 5-16, 1997. Sponsor, Orient Overseas Container Lines, transported free of charge, competitors boats to the series, enabling everyone to sail his own Etchells rather than rely on charters. Strong teams were fielded from abroad: from Australia- John Bertrand, America's Cup skipper who won the Cup from Dennis Conner; Colin Beashel, two time Etchells World Champion, and Noel Drennan. Britain was represented by defending World Champion, Adam Gosling and Tim Law, Mike Till Barry Parkin and Andy Beadsworth. From the US came Jeff Madrigali, 1996 Soling Bronze medalist; Jud Smith, North Americans Champion, and Gary Gilbert.

Thirty boats sailed in this small, but exceptionally strong fleet. Seven Australian, six US and five British boats joined ten Hong Kong competitors plus one Bermudian and one Danish to challenge for the Title.

Regatta Report

John Boxall

I wrote all the competitors at the beginning of November stating: "The weather is not normally like this." At the time, the tropical downpours were more reminiscent of May than November. Whilst we did have some good winds, the weather was very unpredictable for the whole series.

During the Hong Kong China Championships, held as a pre-worlds event, the wind was 10-14 knots, quite shifty and with a very lumpy sea, made for good gains and in many cases big losses on both bears and runs. Michael Coxon tore up his state of the art tuning guide and reverted to basics as did Jeff Madrigali and Noel Drennan.

Having sorted out how to sail in these condition, they changed abruptly for the practice race of the World Championship. A solid 20-22 knots provided for exciting sailing with the first two mile beat taking 32 minutes and the run a mere 13. As Tim Law on GBR 127 put it, "If anyone has a problem with racing today, they have a serious problem!"

The first three races in the stronger winds were all Australia with Noel Drennan winning the first two and John Bertrand, the third; overall they were closely followed by Colin Beashel and Michael Coxon. The expected challenge from the Europeans in the shape of Poul-Richard Høj-Jensen, Adam Gosling and Barry

Parkin had yet to materialize and Hong Kong China Champion Jeff Madrigali had started slowly with a tenth, ninth and a DSQ. However, with the winds dropping off to 10-14 knots for Race Four, Madrigali showed his mastery in these conditions by leading comfortably throughout the race, but receiving a fright at the end when a 15 degree shift to the right resulted in a three foot winning margin over Ian Johnson, who had a similar cushion on Høj-Jensen. Coxon was promoted to joint second after a protest against the committee boat was allowed. Going into the layday the overall positions (with discards) of the leading boats were as follows: John Bertrand 8.7, Noel Drennan 10.0, Michael Coxon 20.0, Poul Richard Høj Jensen 23.7, Colin Beashel 24.7, Mark Thornburrow 29.0 and Jeff Madrigali 31.0.

It looked like a two horse race between Bertrand and Drennan with five boats fighting it out for third place, while Madrigali was ruing the fifth place he lost in Race Three.

Thursday, the layday was completely windless as was Friday, scheduled for Race Five. After two and a half hours, Jimmy Farquhar, PRO, reluctantly but wisely sent us home. Thus, in order to meet the requirements of the Etchells Class Rules, we needed to complete two races on Saturday to have a recognized series or to hold the awards ceremony Saturday evening without knowing the winners!

Saturday dawned fine and flat calm. We were towed out to the race area at nine o'clock to sit and wait. The scene-many Etchells floating about with bare poles, crews catching up on lost sleep and looking like mini Marie Celestes. The only excitement was watching boats start the race to Macau for the Grand Prix weekend. The wise ones fired up their engines with two minutes to go and motored off. Meanwhile, we sat and waited. Mothie never stopped talking and by midday in the flat calm, I was mentally composing my welcoming speech to the "Not the Etchells Prize Giving" - "It give me great pleasure to request CC Tung, chairman and CEO of Orient Overseas International, to present the winners prize to whoever is successful tomorrow or Monday."

But-what's that - at 12:30 John Elsdén detected a little zephyr from the southeast at the weather mark. Farquhar hoisted the come-to-me signal and we were towed halfway to the Lemas. The fastest act in town had the course set and the first race off by 1:05 in 7-10 knots. The wind consistently moved anti-clockwise and the right paid off handsomely. All the leading boats were in contention, it was Madrigali, showing his liking for this weather who crossed first ahead of Høj-Jensen.

1997 OOCL Etchells World Championship Results

Pos.	Skipper/Crew	Sail #	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Net Pts/
1	Poul-Richard Høj-Jensen, Paul Blowers, Steve Mitchell	DEN 1067	5	4	(11)	3	2	2	29.7
2	Colin Beashel, Richard Uechtritz, David Giles	AUS 372	2	6	5	(12)	4	1	32.7
3	Noel Drennan, Nick Williams, Wayne Johnstone	AUS 379	1	1	(14)	5	7	6	34.7
4	John Bertrand, Ernest Lawrence, Bill Browne	AUS 348	3	2	1	8	9	(13)	37.7
5	Jeff Madrigali, John Jansheski, Mike Condon	USA 1091	10	9	(DSQ)	1	1	5	41.0
6	Michael Coxon, Steve Jarvin, William McCarthy	AUS 368	9	8	2	2	(11)	4	43.0
7	Mark Thornburrow, Grey Gibson, Gerry Shutt	HKG 43	4	11	4	7	(OCS)	8	60.0
8	Steve Wright, Bill Barton, John Harrop	USA 984	(12)	10	12	11	3	3	62.4
9	Jud Smith, Glen Burton, Patrick Goodrow	USA 1063	7	7	(9)	6	6	9	64.4
10	Gary Gilbert, Rob Erda, Mark Mendelblatt	USA 959	6	12	3	15	8	(21)	70.4
11	Ian Johnson, Gary Smith, Tim Ede	AUS 336	16	13	(23)	2	5	11	71.5
12	Barry Parkin, Mike Till, Andy Beadsworth	GBR 82	13	5	8	13	(26)	17	85.0
13	Adam Gosling, David Howlett, Mel Coleman	GBR 117	15	3	6	(24)	18	18	88.4
14	Warwick Downes, Fred Kinmouth, John Boxall	HKG 51	19	13	10	10	(21)	7	89.5
15	Tim Law, Steve Girling, Mark Spruce	GBR 127	11	16	17	(19)	13	14	101.0
16	Tim Patton, Tim Lynch, Mike Heln	BER 4	17	19	13	(DSQ)	14	12	105.0
17	Peter Ahern, Bruce McBriar, Guy Salter	HKG 384	(23)	20	7	22	17	10	106.0
18	Ante Razmilovic, Stuart Flynn, Douglas Peterson	GBR 120	18	15	(26)	9	12	24	108.0
19	Richard Kendall, M. Pakenham, Glenn Kim, Katrina Hogan	HKG 46	8	17	16	(23)	22	16	109.0
20	Nick Burns, Rob Law, Colin McMahon, Ross McDonald	HKG 39	22	22	(24)	14	15	20	123.0
21	Ganson Evans, Sam Evans, Ian Evans, Spencer Evans	USA 635	20	18	18	18	20	RTD	124.0
22	Dave Yourieff, Anthony Hill, Peter Thomas	HKG 27	14	(OCS)	19	20	19	25	127.0
23	Steve Schram, Henry Spingler, Buster Pike	USA 1096	25	21	21	17	(25)	15	129.0
24	Mark Yeadon, Jorgen Christianson, Andrew Moore	HKG 10	29	26	20	21	10	(29)	136.0
25	Bill Steele, Leon Christianakis, Andrew Steele	GBR 28	21	(RTD)	15	25	27	19	137.0
26	Richard Hammon, Steve Trevillion, Todd Trevillion	AUS 259	(27)	23	22	16	24	23	138.0
27	Keith Mowser, Dave Reid, Gideon Mowser	HKG 29	(30)	24	27	26	16	28	151.0
28	David Coldwell, Tim Redfren, John Breen	HKG 42	28	(RTD)	25	27	28	22	160.0
29	Alex Hill, Lars Jorgenson, Simon Davidson	HKG 20	24	(OCS)	29	28	23	27	161.0
30	Michael Wilkinson, Rob Williams, Steve Henley	AUS 386	26	25	28	(29)	29	26	164.00

Thornburrow crossed third, only to be declared OCS, or pre-mature starter as we know it.

Farquhar decided to try for a second race with a 3:00 pm start; the short time between races probably did not allow sufficient time for the leaders to do the calculation of standings going into the last race. Of the top seven, only Thornburrow was eliminated from a chance of winning the Championship. This left an unprecedented six boats with a chance of winning the OOCL Worlds Championship, with Bertrand, Drennan and Høj-Jensen a mere two place apart. Bertrand lost it by being OCS and had to restart.

The beat was extremely tight and the top five boats tacked on top of each other several times in the last half mile. Høj-Jensen rounded first, followed by Beashel, Coxon and Madrigali. The run proved crucial with those carrying a starboard pole gaining considerably on those doing the gibe-set. Beashel took the lead and disappeared; but Høj-Jensen held on, finishing second, but coming first in 1997 OOCL Etchells World Championship. □



Jeff Madrigali, USA 1091, and Aussies Colin Beashel, AUS 372, Ian Johnson, AUS 336, and Noel Drennan, AUS 379, take the front row in start of Race 4, OOCL World Championship. Madrigali went on to win the race, followed by Ian Johnson, second, and Poul-Richard Høj-Jensen, third.