Laser World

March 2009

DOUBLE ISAF WORLD CUP VICTORY FOR TUNNICLIFFE

- Sail Melbourne
- Rolex Miami OCR
- New 2009-2012 Racing Rules of Sailing

Sail Melbourne

16th-21st December 2008, Melbourne, Australia


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As the first of seven events in the inaugural ISAF Sailing World Cup series, Sail Melbourne brought together a combination of Olympic stars and 2012 hopefuls to Port Phillip Bay for six days of intense racing.

Despite the first day of sailing being postponed for the Laser Radial class due to light winds, improved conditions on day two of Sail Melbourne saw some impressive racing. Olympic gold medalist Anna Tunnicliffe (USA), made the most of the three races in the Laser Radial class to pull out a three-point overall lead. In the Men's One Person Dinghy – Laser fleet, Michael Bullot of New Zealand led on nine points, with Matias del Solar of Chile a single point behind and James Sandall, also of New Zealand, coming in third with 18 points overall. It was a disappointing start for world number four skipper Michael Leigh (CAN), who was twelth in races one and two, before recovering with a second place finish in race three, ending the first day in seventh place overall on 26 points.

After some good weather conditions and more intense racing on day three, Tunnicliffe worked her way through the field to post a third, second and first respectively to lead the regatta on six points. She was closely followed by Croatia's Tina Mihelic, the 2006 winner of the Volvo Youth Sailing ISAF World Championship, on 9 points. Australia's new young star Gabrielle King, a double (2007 and 2008) Volvo Youth Sailing ISAF World Champion, got her series off to a solid start with 8, 12, 3 scores putting her fifth overall, behind Andrea Brewster of Great Britain.

In the men's, Bullot continued his strong start and maintained his position at the top of the leaderboard, with Chile's Matias del Solar one point behind after impressive 4,1,4 scores. Milan Vujasinovic of Croatia came third, whilst Leigh began his fight back and moved to fourth overall on the back of 8, 4, 5 scores.

Tunnicliffe revelled in the stronger conditions on day four, winning all three races to take a commanding lead into the second half of the regatta. King also put in a strong performance, with two seconds and a fifth helping her jump from fifth to second place overall, four points ahead of Croatian Mihelic and Britain's Brewster.

Day five saw Gabrielle King achieve two second places in the day's races, closing the gap on overall leader Anna Tunnicliffe to just seven points. Tina Mihelic of Croatia led a close battle for third place, just ahead of Sara Winther (NZL) and Andrea Brewster. Matias del Solar picked the perfect time to find his best form as he took a major step towards an ISAF Sailing World Cup gold medal with two great results. Scoring second and first place finishes in races nine and ten of the Laser series, del Solar extended his overall lead to 13 points with just one race remaining.

Michael Bullot lost ground on the leader after scores of 8 and 3 in the day's two races. Bullot had a fight on to maintain second place overall with Leigh just four points further back.

There was no surprise finish at the end of the final day. After dominating the week's racing with five wins from 11 starts, Tunnicliffe held off a late charge from Gabrielle King to win her class on 25 points, nine points clear of King, with Andrea Brewster coming in third with 40 points. After dominating the week's proceedings in the Laser class, Matias del Solar showed his form in the crucial final races. After a fourth place in the final race, del Solar ended the regatta winning with 30 points, an impressive 17 points clear of Mike Bullot who came in second. Milan Vujasinovic came in third on 53 points, just beating Mike Leigh to the final podium position.

The next stage of the ISAF Sailing World Cup moved to North America, for the second event, the Rolex Miami OCR - full report on page 7.

Find out more about the ISAF Sailing World Cup, including more on the seven events, the scoring system and the Notice of Series at www.sailing.org/isafsailingworldcup.


© Bill Bell

Matias del Solar.


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Anna Tunnicliffe.

ILCA Membership

Our class President, Heini Wellmann, discusses why LaserWorld was made available on the ILCA website and what ILCA members get for their money.

At the World Council meeting in October 2008 it was decided to put all old issues of LaserWorld on the ILCA website. This was part of an overall communication strategy review for ILCA's three main publications: LaserWorld, the website and the yearly Handbook.

There were three reasons for this decision:

- LaserWorld often contains very interesting articles, which can still be of interest a few months or years later, for example tips on sailing and rigging techniques. Most sailors however do not keep the old printed editions of LaserWorld and are therefore pleased if they can find the old articles in the "information archive" of the website.
- Another reason is the distribution of LaserWorld. The publication is prepared by the ILCA office and sent to the Districts for distribution to their members. Many Districts have their own newsletter which they send out with the latest issue of LaserWorld, while others make a separate send-out. However, this is costly and time consuming, so they just pile-up in the District office and never get to the members. Often they arrive up to six months later and many articles have lost their relevance. Hence it is important to be able to find the most recent issue of LaserWorld on the website.
- And finally, a new member can easily find the current edition, as well as old editions of LaserWorld on the website.

However, we have received a number of negative reactions from ILCA members who felt that a publication that was only exclusively available to its members before can now be read by anybody free of charge, and therefore we were taking away an important attraction of becoming a member of ILCA. For some members – in particular the "weekend sailors" - LaserWorld was perceived to be the only concrete benefit from ILCA against the £5 membership fee the Districts send to ILCA every year.

This argument leads to two questions:

What else does ILCA do for its members in addition to LaserWorld, and why should a Laser sailor become a member of the Association?

What does ILCA do for its members?

Remember that ILCA is much more than just the offices in Falmouth/UK and in the USA. Its heart and soul are the hundreds of volunteers worldwide, who give their time and energy for the class. It is in the Districts where it all happens, where the bulk of the regattas are organised with the help of the local sailing clubs. Each District collects its own membership fees to finance its activities, and the £5 it sends to the international office in Falmouth per member makes up only 10% to 25% of the fee it collects from its members.

But what else does the ILCA international office do in addition to LaserWorld? The main activities are in a nutshell:

- Regattas for eight Laser World Championships per year: establishing the calendar, selecting venues, drawing up contracts with organising clubs, assisting and supervising on site, the administration of championship entry and charter boats and publication of results.
- Technical and Measurement: assuring the one design of the class through the maintenance of the Laser Construction Manual and periodic factory visits by the Technical Officer; maintaining the class rules; measurers training.
- Representing the three Laser classes – Laser Standard, Laser Radial and Laser 4.7 - within ISAF (International Sailing Federation).
- Maintaining the ILCA website, editing the yearly handbook and finally producing the quarterly LaserWorld.

Why should a Laser sailor become a member of the Association?

The majority of Laser sailors are not interested in participating in World Championships. Many are weekend sailors and only occasionally participating in a local regatta. Nevertheless, they should become a member of the Association by supporting the volunteers who make it all happen. Even the small local regattas need to be organised.

The big attraction of the Laser is its strict one design aspect. Only in the Laser class can you go to a foreign regatta, rent a boat locally and be competitive. The maintenance of the one design is in the interest of everybody – be it an Olympic or weekend sailor.

Show your solidarity and become a member of the class!

I wish you happy Laser Sailing!

Heini Wellmann

Swedish Masters

The Swedish Masters Championship took place in Fjällbacka on the beautiful Swedish west coast archipelago in October 2008. This was the first Swedish National qualifier for the World Laser Masters Championship, which is taking place in Canada at the end of August 09. There was a huge amount of interest, with 119 participants from Norway, Finland, Germany and Sweden.

The day before the regatta began, Swedish Masters sailors were invited to participate in the "Around Valö Race". The wind was 12 knots at the start, but after about an hour the wind decreased and changed direction, leading to a lot of changes within the fleet.

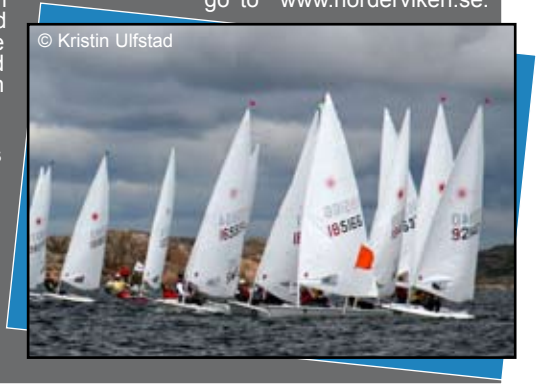
The winner of the Laser Standard fleet was Victor Västernäs, with Peter Andersson as the first Masters sailor. In the Laser Radial fleet, Yvonne Malmsten finally made it to the gun in less than 1 knot of wind after several changes during the race.

The weather for the first race day on Saturday was sunny with light wind conditions of 5 to 8 knots. Thanks to these conditions, the sailing committee managed to run all planned races for the day, with only minor changes of the race course.

Sunday was the last day, with Easterly winds of around 15 knots for the 2 first races and around 8 to 10 knots for the last race. The predicted rain and 20 knot westerly wind thankfully came after the last race.

The winner of the Laser Standard class and the first apprentice was Niklas Edler from KSSS. Winner of the Laser Master class was Christian Gunni Pedersen and of the Grand Master class Lennart Eriksson.

In the Laser Radial class there were three women at the top with Agneta Jonsson as winner. Winner of Great Grand Master class was Curt Blidner. For full results and photographs from the regatta, please go to www.norderviken.se.



Is Your Rudder Angle Correct?

Technical Officer Clive Humphris discusses the rudder angle and passing inspection.

Figure 1.

At championships, measurers are often asked what angle the rudder should be set at, how this is measured and, if it is wrong, how it can be fixed. This article is intended to answer these questions.

Using a measuring gauge (figure 1), the angle is measured between the bottom edge of the rudder box and the front edge of the rudder blade.

So, if the front edge of the rudder exceeds 78 degrees, it is more vertical than it should be.

The sanctioned method (Rule 15(e) of the Laser Class Rules) to correct this is to wind plastic tape around the front lower rudder box spacer pin (figure 2).

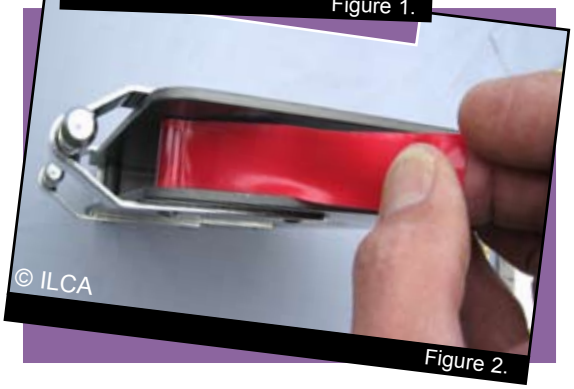


Figure 2.

Note: you are **not** allowed to add material to the front of the rudder to achieve the same effect.

If the rudder angle is significantly less than 78 degrees, you may cut away the rudder where it touches the spacing pin (see Rule 15(d)).

Be careful though, as just 1mm of cut away will result in about 1 degree of rudder movement.

You are always safer to make it slightly less than 78 degrees to allow for wear on the pivot bolt hole and the contact area to the spacing pin (figure 3).

With the recent availability of new fibreglass skinned rudders, both Performance Sailcraft Australia and Laser Performance inform us that the incidence of rudders being significantly below 78 degrees (in conjunction with a modern rudder head) is extremely low.

If required, the gel coat can be wet sanded to fine tune the angle.

However, sanding into the laminate will weaken the blade and is not advised.

Figure 3.

Captain's Log

Record World Championship Entries

The world may be in recession but so far this has not affected interest in all our 2009 World Championships that are standing at record levels for their respective continents. The **Laser 4.7 Worlds** in Buzios, Brazil have applications from 230 competitors from 37 countries requiring a fleet of 140 charter boats. The **Laser Radial Women's Worlds** fleet in Karatsu, Japan will be up to the 120 boat limit with entries from 37 countries. The same number of countries have entered the **Laser Radial Youth Worlds** and the 120 charter boat fleet has had to be expanded to 160 to cope with increased entry numbers in the week following the women's worlds!

Later this year, demand for places at the **Laser Standard Worlds**, Canada has been so high that, for the first time since the Laser became an Olympic class, the entry limit has been increased to 180 competitors to cope with the increasing demand. Sixty countries participating is the highest country participation ever at this point in the Olympic quadrennium! In the following week the 400 **Laser Masters** expected from 34 countries will be the largest Laser fleet ever gathered in North America!

Olympic Equipment

At the annual ISAF meetings the Laser and Laser Radial were re-selected as the men's and women's one person dinghy equipment for 2012 in a block vote with the men's and women's windsurfer, and the men's one person dinghy (heavy), two person dinghy, two person dinghy (high performance), keelboat. This selection will also provide a positive lead for regional games over the next 4 years where the Laser and Laser Radial are normally the strongest classes.

Future ISAF Youth Worlds

The ISAF meeting also selected Dublin as the venue for the ISAF Youth Worlds in 2012. With the Laser Radial being used in Turkey in 2010 and probably Croatia in 2011, hopefully it will not be a very difficult decision for Dublin to also choose the same single handed equipment to provide the important long term planning and continuity that many countries ask ISAF for when selecting equipment.

2009 should be a great year for Laser.

Jeff Martin

Rule Changes - Vote Now!

The following five proposed changes are housekeeping. They are considered minor and have no effect on performance. The rule changes 1, 2, 3 and 4 are clarifying questions from measurers. Rule change 5 provides a more practicable solution to centreboard slot wear.

The rule changes have been approved by the World Council.

They are now referred to all members of the ILCA for acceptance.

The rule changes also have to be approved by the International Sailing Federation (ISAF). In this process some minor rewording can occur without changing the principle.

1 Rule 13 Self Bailer

Modify rule 13 to add the following sentence:

The builder supplied o-rings may be substituted with non builder-supplied alternatives provided the basic function of the bailer is unchanged.

EXPLANATION: A common sailor complaint centres on the maintenance of the o-rings responsible for the proper operation of the self bailer. In particular they seem to need frequent replacement and often sailors can't easily find builder supplied replacements.

2 Rule 3(f) Outhaul

Modify rule 3(f)(v) to add the following sentence:

The blocks in this rule may also be attached to the gooseneck with a bolt or a pin.

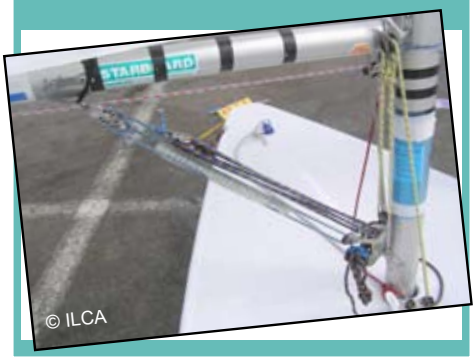
EXPLANATION: Rule 3(a)(vi) currently reads:- "When an optional block or shock cord is attached to a fitting, line, mast, boom or the sail, it may be attached either with or without a shackle, clips, balls, hooks and/or a tie line." This makes it illegal to bolt the blocks using the hole in the gooseneck. The use of a bolt or a pin at the gooseneck is similar to using a shackle and is more readily available.

3 Rule 3(b) Control lines and fittings

Add new rule 3(b)(xii):

Reference points (marks) may be placed on the deck, spars and ropes.

EXPLANATION: The inclusion of specific wording removes any doubt about legality.



4 Rule 26 Repairs and maintenance

Add new rule: 26(f):

The use of lubricants is unrestricted except that they shall not be used on the hull (below the gunwhales).

EXPLANATION: The inclusion of specific wording removes any doubt about legality.

5 Rule 14 Centreboard

Modify rule 14(d) to deregulate the tape material as follows:

One layer of ~~general purpose self adhesive plastic tape (includes duct and gaffer tape)~~ <u>any material</u> of maximum 2mm thickness and of a maximum size of 30mm x 30mm may be applied at the top front corner of the centreboard case.

EXPLANATION: This was originally introduced so that sailors can protect the gel coat in what is normally a high wear point of the boat. Sailors have found that it is not easy to find a general purpose tape that will last very long. One example of a material that is durable is the loop side of self adhesive tape Velcro.

Only fully paid class member votes will be counted. Please take advantage of your right to be part of this democratic process. Your vote is important.

Please vote using the voting slip below or online at:

www.laserinternational.org/rules2009

<u>ILCA RULE CHANGE VOTING FORM</u>

Please complete and return to arrive before 1 September 2009 to:
ILCA, PO Box 26, FALMOUTH,
Cornwall TR11 3TN, UK
or by fax to: +44 1326 318968

Name _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ **Membership No**_ _ _ _ _ _ _

Country _

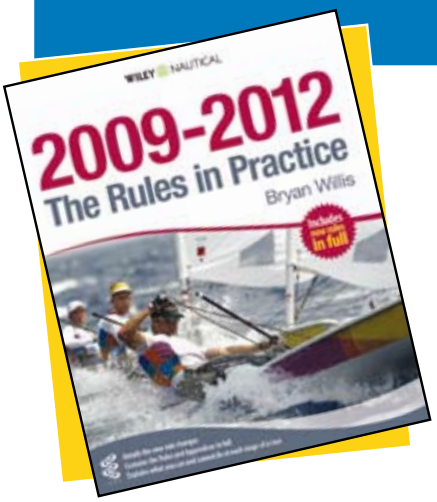
Email _

For each proposal, please DELETE as appropriate:

1 - Self Bailer	YES / NO	**4** - Repairs	YES / NO
2 - Outhaul	YES / NO	**5** - Centerboard	YES / NO
3 - Control Lines	YES / NO		

Changes to the Racing Rules

Introduced by Jeff Martin



The International Sailing Federation publish updates to the Racing Rules after an Olympic Games. It is also a time when the various writers of books on the Racing Rules update their publications. One of my favourite rule books is "The Rules in Practice" by Bryan Willis.

Bryan has written his book in the order of how situations arise as you progress round a race course. He starts at the start and then moves upwind, around the first mark and then downwind. So if you have an incident you can easily look it up according to where it took place. Using diagrams showing Laser boats, Bryan then gives you an opinion and the rules involved, depending on which boat you are in the diagram!

The book also includes a full copy of the new Racing Rules. As well as being a good reference it is also a very useful and easy to follow, learning and revision aid.

With the kind permission of the publishers, Wiley Nautical, we have re-printed below Bryan's comments on the Racing Rule changes from "The Rules in Practice" copyright Bryan Willis.

"The size of 'zones' at marks has been increased to three hull lengths. There is no longer a 'Two-Length zone', just a 'zone' which is defined as 'The area around a mark within a distance of three hull lengths of the boat nearer to it. A boat is in the zone when any part of her hull is in the zone'. 'Sailing instructions may change to 'two' or 'four' the number of hull lengths determining the zone around marks, provided that the number is the same for all boats using those marks and for all the marks on the course'. (Rules: definitions & 86.1(b)).

It will be interesting to see how many organizers take up the opportunity of increasing or decreasing the size of the zone for the races under their jurisdiction.

There is a new definition called 'mark-room'. Under the old rules, when a right-of-way boat was required to 'give room' at a mark, the amount of room was 'the space a boat needs in the existing conditions while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanlike way'. The position at which an outside boat had to start giving room was a little vague. Now, as soon as one of the boats is in the zone (three hull lengths) then the outside boat must give sufficient room to the inside boat to 'sail to the mark' in a seamanlike manner. Then, at that moment, the outside must give room for the inside boat to sail her proper course around the mark.

Normally the obligation starts when either boat has reached the zone. But there is an important exception. If boats are overlapped, and the outside boat will need to change course before the zone in order to give room, then she must do so; she can't wait till the zone and then claim the three lengths was not enough distance to change course to give room. This is important for asymetrics or catamarans on opposite tacks at a starboard-hand leeward mark, but may apply to keel boats or even dinghies in light winds when there is a strong tidal stream taking them towards the mark.

Another important change is that mark-rounding rules do not apply between a boat that is leaving a mark and one that is approaching it - the normal right-of-way rules apply between them.

It continues to be the case that at a port-hand windward mark a boat tacking onto starboard tack in the zone must not 'cause the other boat to sail above close-hauled to avoid her or prevent the other boat from passing the mark' and 'shall give mark-room if the other boat becomes overlapped inside her' but with the increased size of the zone, it makes a layline approach when you have to tack even more difficult.

Under the old rules having an overlap at two lengths from a non-continuing obstruction (such as a big mooring buoy, or a right-of-way boat, or a shoreline) was as important as it was at a mark. But no one took much notice. The new rules remove the requirement for a boat needing room at an obstruction to be overlapped at a particular distance from it. Now the only criteria for a keep-clear boat astern trying to get an inside overlap, is whether the outside boat is able to give room from the time the overlap began. If she can't then the inside boat has no right to room. (Rule 19.2(a)).

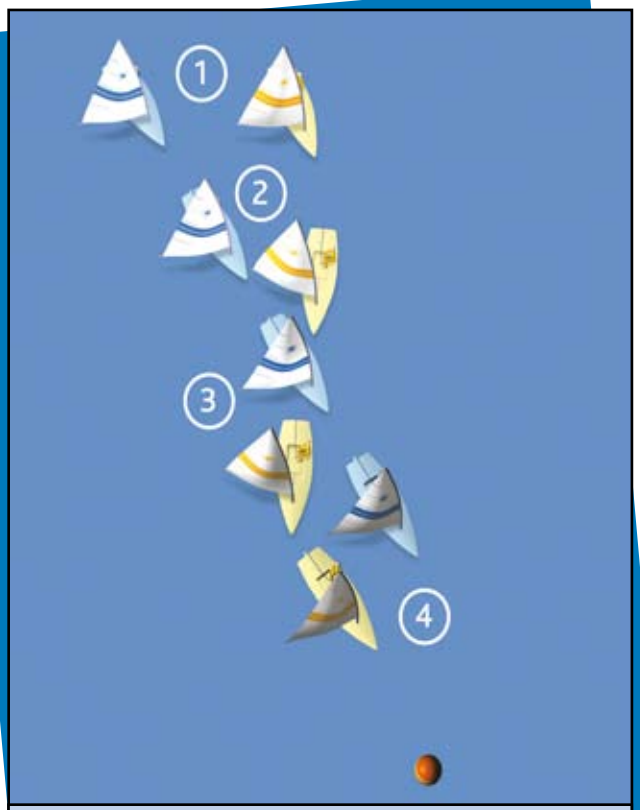
This will be particularly important the last seconds before a start when a boat astern tries to get between two other boats; the leeward boat is an obstruction so the test will be 'can the windward boat keep clear from the time the overlap was established?'

It is now clear that when a right-of-way boat establishes an inside overlap at an obstruction, she has the right to room. Typically the two boats are running beside an obstruction, with the boat astern on starboard tack and the boat ahead on port tack. The port-tack boat must keep clear and give room. Two boats approaching a mark must be left to starboard."

This section is taken from Wiley Nautical's latest publication, 'The Rules in Practice 2009 - 2012' by Bryan Willis.

Priced at £14.95 the 'The Rules in Practice' is available to order from the Laser Library.

www.laserinternational.org/library



Under the old rules, Yellow broke a rule (at position 2) by sailing below her proper course when Blue was steering a course to leeward of her. That rule has been deleted in the new rules. It is still true that when there is an overlap the windward boat must keep clear.

US Sailing's 2009 Rolex Miami OCR


© Rolex/ Dan Nerney

It's not often in a sailing regatta that a single 30-minute race decides the outcome, but that's exactly what happened on the last day of competition for US SAILING's Rolex Miami OCR, serving as the second of seven stops on the 2008 - 2009 ISAF Sailing World Cup tour. The event, which ran from 25th – 31st January 2009, hosted 444 sailors from 41 countries in ten Olympic and three Paralympic classes. Nine of the Olympic classes participated in a spectacular finale in which the top-ten sailors, determined from scores after five days of fleet racing, competed in medal races for double points which could not be used as a discard.

In the 63-boat Laser class, the largest of the regatta, Nick Thompson (GBR) had to keep Pavlos Kontides (CYP) at bay to win the gold. "First I pinned him to the left and then I pinned him on the right," said Thompson about his tactics on two different upwind legs, which left Kontides to settle for silver. "It was good fun, very shifty," said Thompson, "but I wasn't really playing shifts; I was spending so much time looking behind me". Another one he loosely covered was Brad Funk (USA), who took bronze and is now on the U.S. Sailing Team AlphaGraphics. "Brad had to beat me or finish within four boats, but I had more of a speed edge on him," said Thompson.

The top battle in the 41-boat Laser Radial fleet was between long-time U.S. Sailing Team AlphaGraphics members Anna Tunnicliffe (USA) and Paige Railey (USA). Tunnicliffe, a gold medalist from Qingdao who has been named US SAILING's Rolex Yachtswoman of the Year, finished third to Railey's fourth, leaving Railey the silver medal. "Paige had a good start," said Tunnicliffe, with a nod to the 15-18 knot winds. "My plan was to be top-three and at worst be two boats behind her. I had a decent start and was fourth at the top mark with Paige in front of me." Tunnicliffe explained that one of the Danish team fell back and she split at the gates with Railey. "That put me ahead of Paige, so I just covered her from there." About this event being part of the inaugural ISAF World Cup, Tunnicliffe said: "There's a bit more pressure to perform. It was a nice way to start the quadrennium."

> "There's a bit more pressure to perform. It was a nice way to start the quadrennium"

Cumulative points tallied from the inaugural ISAF Sailing World Cup 2008-2009 will determine World Cup champions in each of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic classes. The series started with Sail Melbourne (Australia) last December and rounds out with the Trofeo SAR Princess Sofia (Palma, Spain) and Semaine Olympique Française (Hyères, France) in April; Delta Lloyd Regatta (Medemblik, The Netherlands) in May; Kieler Woche (Kiel, Germany) in June; and Skandia Sail for Gold (Weymouth, Great Britain) in September.

Regatta results, photos and updates are posted at www.rolexmiamiocr.org.


© Rolex/ Dan Nerney

Anna Tunnicliffe, Paige Railey & Jennifer Spaulding.


© Rolex/ Dan Nerney

Brad Funk, Nick Thompson & Pavlos Kontides.

Central & South American Championships 2009


© Matias Capizzano

Whilst the European season slows down due to the winter break, January is the highlight of the Laser sailing season in South America. This year is no exception, as the best sailors of the continent met once again for the Laser Central and South American 2009, from 8th to 18th January 2009.

This year's event was hosted by Chile, at the wonderful Lake Vichuquen, located 300 km south of the capital city Santiago de Chile. Surrounded by mountains and yet located only 25 km distance from the Pacific sea, Vichuquen offered a quite reliable sea breeze ranging 6-15 knots every day. Complex gusty and shifty conditions created a very technical racecourse and a true challenge for the sailors and race committee.

A total of 109 entries included Laser 4.7, Laser Radial and Laser Standard rigs coming from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico and even Finland. From shining international stars like Olympians Julio Alsogaray and Matias del Solar Goldsmith, to new and promising Laser 4.7 entries, not to mention a large number of boys and girls at the Laser Radial fleet, passionate amateurs, local sailing legends like "Tito" Gonzalez and even some masters sailors ready to battle.

The Laser Radials started the event. After a total of 11 races, and a final protest to decide the podium, Argentine Federico Buiatti claimed early title with one race to spare, followed by Luis Horacio "Dingo" Canuto (ARG) and Juan Pablo "Chompi" Bisio. Finishing 7th place overall, the Female title went to Aranxta Gumuncio (CHI).

The weather conditions remained breezy for the Laser Standard and Laser 4.7 championships.

The battle for the Laser Standard title was exciting, as Julio Alsogaray and Matias del Solar Goldsmith performed an impressive and consistent series right down to the match-race on the last day of the event.

Finally, after a strong "mano a mano" battle, Alsogaray (ARG) prevailed and claimed his first South American title ever, followed by del Solar Goldsmith (CHI), whilst bronze went to an outstanding (yet not unexpected) Matias Seguel (CHI).

At the Laser 4.7 class, the racing was tough as well, with three sailors in the running for the title on the last day. Thanks to a very consistent final day, Tomas Dietrich (ARG) took the title, followed by Andres Ducasse (CHI) and Bruno Lossio (BRA).

For full results please go to www.laserchile.cl.


© Matias Capizzano

2008 Laser Europa Cup Review

The Laser Europa Cup & Youth Grand Prix is a highly contested series of regattas run through-out the year in Europe. Encompassing all Laser rigs and age ranges and with a diverse range of venues and challenging competition, the Laser Europa Cup is a rewarding annual challenge for Laser sailors.

The Cup is open to any Laser sailor as long as they are members of their national class association. The 2008 series attracted 1278 competitors. The majority of sailors were of course European, however, as the sailing season wound down in the southern hemisphere, competitors from overseas joined in to battle it out in Europa Cup regattas like Hoorn in the Netherlands and Warnemünde in Germany. In particular Olympic sailors like Canadian Mike Leigh, Dominican Republic's Raul Aguayo and Malaysia's Kevin Lim were participating in Europa Cup regattas in preparation for Quingdao.

Sailors can participate either in the Laser Standard, Laser Radial or Laser 4.7 rig. In 2008, the Radial rig accounted for almost half the entries to the regattas, while the Laser 4.7 rig attracted nearly as many sailors to the Europa Cup as the Laser Standard rig, a tell tale sign that the 4.7 rig is becoming more and more popular.

The 2008 series proved as exciting as ever, showcasing real sailing talent and some nail biting finishes to the series. In the Laser 4.7, Giovanni Coccoluto from Italy showed skill and determination with 5 out of the 7 regatta wins. As only the best 4 results are included in the overall scoring, the 15-year old finished the series on 4 points, the best possible score. In the Laser 4.7 girls category, Croatian girls Antea Kordic and Matea Senkic were battling yet again for the top spot. Senkic had already beaten Kordic to the second place at the 2008 World Laser 4.7 Youth Championship and went into the last regatta in Hvar, Croatia with a good chance of taking the top spot. But even though she finished 5 points ahead of Kordic in Hvar, Kordic was able to discard a 26 point score from a regatta in Italy earlier in the season and so managed to slip past her into first place with 2 points difference.

In the Laser Radial rig, full time sailor Jon Emmett from Great Britain took the overall category by storm, attending and winning 4 events in a row. Hot on his heels was Viktor Teplý with only 8 points. The 18-year old from the Czech Republic who had won the Laser 4.7 boys category the previous year, moved to the Laser Radial rig for the 2008 series and had a fantastic debut with a second place overall as well as winning the Youth Under 19 category. Another smooth and successful transition from the Laser 4.7 to the Laser Radial rig was showcased by Tajana Ganic from Croatia, who had won the Laser 4.7 Girls category in the previous year, and finished in the top spot of the Laser Radial Women category.

In the Laser Standard rig, Croatian Ivan Taritaš beat last year's winner Dany Stanisic to the top spot by finishing on 30 points overall.

Thirteen venues are taking part in the 2009 series of the Europa Cup which will kick off in Lugano Switzerland from 19th to 22nd March and finish with a bang in Hvar, Croatia from 28th to 31st December. Balatonfüred in Hungary, a popular resort town on the north shore of the Balaton Lake is a new addition to the cup. Superb water quality and temperatures above twenty degrees Celsius from May to September make this a beautiful spot for sailing. Another new addition is Vigo in Spain. The host club Real Club Náutico de Vigo lies approximately 150km north of Matosinhos in Portugal and so makes this a perfect venue for the Laser Europa Cup circuit.

To find out more about the 2009 Europa Cup series, visit the new Laser Europa Cup web pages at www.laserinternational.org/ecup2009/index

7th Annual Caribbean Midwinters

The 7th Caribbean Laser Midwinter Regatta was held in Cabarete, Dominican Republic on 16-18th January 2009. The event was hosted by the Laser Training Center and was sponsored by Palmera de Cabarete, a new luxury development in Cabarete.

With over 60 sailors with a wide age range competing, the fleet featured some of today's top Laser sailors from legends to future superstars straight out of the Optimist program.

Eric Holmbom from the Dominican Republic won the top honors in the Laser 4.7, beating fellow Dominican Republic sailor Sebastian Bros by just 1 point overall.

At the other end of the age spectrum the Great Grand Master fleet included legends Dick Tillman and Peter Seidenberg and it was a surprise to see this category won by new Laser sailor, 70 year old Jan Salin of Sweden.

Other Masters category winners included:

Apprentice Master: Mike Matan (GBR)
Grand Master: Ken Brown (CAN)
Radial: Peter Seidenberg (USA)
Women: Judith Krimski (USA)

The overall Masters group was won by former Olympic Bronze medalist Terry Neilson (CAN) who donated his $1,000.00 prize money to the Dominican Youth Sailing Program. He was closely followed be Peter Vessella of the USA, who finished just one point behind to take 2nd place overall.

In the open category Nick Thompson of the United Kingdom took away $1,750.00 in prize money followed by 2nd place Javier Hernandez of Spain who received $1,250.00, and 3rd place Brad Funk of the USA, who went home with $1,000.00.

For full results and pictures:
www.midwinterregatta.com