

## Aussies Shine in European Team Racing Classic

A team of Optimist Sailors from Royal Perth Yacht Club set the International Optimist dinghy sailing world on fire this week by securing a place in the finals of the prestigious Trofeo Marco Rizzotti Teams Racing event in Venice.

The Team included Douglas Campbell, Mark Spearman, Sam Blackburn and Nia Jerwood, all members of the Australian Optimist Sailing Team. Unlike conventional team racing, in Optimist Team racing, four boats compete for each team which makes the racing even more exciting with winning / losing combinations changing rapidly. A mathematical draw results in the team with the first placed boat losing the match.

The Venice Regatta is considered the most important Team racing event besides the World Championship, which will be sailed in Brazil in August. The Royal Perth squad is the first Australian team to be invited to compete in Venice. 17 teams competed, with representatives from the USA (Florida and New York Yacht Club), Singapore, Italy, Poland, Croatia, Switzerland, Greece and Algeria.

The event included two days of 'Round-Robin' racing to determine the 4 teams that move into the finals. Australia stunned the rest of the World by putting on a masterful display of speed and tactics to earn a place in the top 4. The team beat last years winners, Singapore, and the ultimate winners of this years event, USA(Florida) to make it into the Finals.

Sailing on the picture postcard perfect waters of the Adriatic in 6-8 knot winds, our young team (Nia was the youngest sailor on the course) fell to the experienced Italian team in the first Semi-Final, with a score of 3-1. In the Bronze medal match up against a strong Polish team, the sailors from down-under stretched the Europeans to a 2-2 scoreline. In the final race to determine 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, the Royal Perth team held a one point lead rounding the final bottom mark, but lost one place to allow the wily Poles through to a podium finish.

The Australians from RPYC, sailed back to the Marina, crossing the path of Marco Polo, having defeated the New York Yacht Club and Singapore in the overall results and defeating all teams in head to head matches.

The Italian media ran stories applauding the Aussies and our coach, for example "Non mi stupisce il brillante risultato dell'Australia, allenata da Diego Figueroa, coach internatazionale tra I piu quotati al momento".

The next stop for the globe trotting Opti sailors is the Singapore Open National Fleet and Teams racing Championships in June, followed by the European Championships in Slovenia in July, and the Worlds in Rio in August. All team members arrived home on Tuesday night and are expected to be at school on Wednesday morning! The team would like to acknowledge the support of RPYC and the club's commitment to junior sailing.

(We would welcome a translation to the Italian newspaper story from any readers fluent in Italian)

Report by RPYC Optimist Team

