

OPTIMIST EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS. PIRAN, SLOVENIA

The 2nd of July the Australian Optimist Team at the European Optimist Championship; Georgia Thompson, Sam Blackburn, Maia Agerup and I, had checked in where we were staying during the regatta and were pumped to start training.

The heat took us by a surprise as we are not very used to summer heat in Europe, and we thought it would be colder! We shared a coach boat with USA which was good because training with them gave us an idea of how we were doing compared to other teams as well as getting new friends. We were training everyday before the regatta started and we only had very light breeze. Each morning we were being awakened by our coach Ryan Hannan with a smile on his face because he was going to take us out for the torture running session! Ryan made us run up a big hill to look over the bay and discuss weather patterns and breeze.

The practice race started 5th of July and even though we were warned about people cheating, we couldn't guess that some people would start 1 min before the start actually went off!

The 6th of July arrived and we were all ready to go out and show them what we could do. The regatta opened with very light breeze and for the Aussies who were hoping for lots of wind struggled through the 1st race, except Sam who stood up for Australia's reputation and knocked in with a 10th!



Maia, Ragna, Ryan, Sam and Georgia – first day of racing.

In Europe the fleets are split into girls and boys fleets so we did not have to race the boys. The competition was still very high. In the girls fleet there were 100 sailors and 140 sailors in the boys fleet, and overall 39 countries were represented.

We were scheduled to do 12 races, but as we had three light winds days and (luckily) two heavy winds days, we actually completed 11 races overall. The windy days were good days for some of us Australians, but for the race committee it sometimes got too windy so they decided to send us in when there was perfect breeze! We also got a surprise one morning as we were met by a storm which was totally normal in Croatia but not so normal for us with thunder and lightning on the water. This particular storm is called the BORA BORA and it only lasted for an hour. We were pretty excited about the breeze afterwards, but the start committee took so long getting the course ready so by the time they had sent off the boy's start the wind was long gone.

Sam and myself finished in the top half of the fleet and Maia and Georgia a bit further back. I guess that was a bit below our expectations, but we were surprised by the high quality of all the sailors there and we learned heaps. All in all we were happy with our results !

Representing Australia was so much fun. A lot of people came to us and gave us compliments for travelling so far for this event. Getting to know sailors from all over the world and competing in an intense regatta like this, has taught us a lot. Thank you to our coach Ryan Hannan and continued support from RFBYC. Thank you also to the people at ZHIK who sponsored our apparel and sailing gear!

If you want to read more on how the event was and see some pictures, you can read that at our blog www.optieuro.blogspot.com'

Ragna Agerup, RFBYC