

IODA Asian Sailing Championship 2009

Langkawi - Malaysia

The IODA Asian Championship was held in Langkawi, Malaysia where 121 sailors from 25 Nations competed.

A)Members:

Douglas Campbell (AUS-543)
Sam Blackburn (AUS-556)
Nia Jerwood (AUS-405)
Ragna Agerup(AUS-541)
Fieke Koelemeij (AUS-245)
Dylan Passmore(AUS-380)
Alistair Young (AUS-565)

(6 out of 7 sailors are RPYC members)

B) Pre-Competitive Stage

I arrived in Langkawi on the 5th of December , one week before the start of Asian championship as to attend the Malaysian Nationals with a group of 8 sailors .AOST sailing team of 7 sailors arrived on the 10th to start training towards the championship.

The training was structured as following:

9:00am: Meet at the boat park.
9:00-9:40am: Boat rigging
9:40-10:20am: Briefing
10:20-1:00pm: On water Session I
1:00- 2:20pm: Lunch
2:20-2:30pm: Briefing
2:30-4:30pm: On water Session II
8:00-9:00pm: Debrief (Video)

The first few days, the training was mainly focused on getting as much information about the race course and improving the technique of the group as a whole, that could be translated into better boat speed. The first day the team went on to watch the last day of Malaysian National to get a different perspective of the race course. There was some flexibility reducing amount of time in the water due to high temperatures.

Local Knowledge played a very important role in Langkawi, Monsoon generated winds coming predominantly from the NE but shifting constantly from 60° - 110° with significant changes on pressure due that the wind comes from the surrounding hills in the bay. Wind although came from all possible directions with an average of 4- 8 knots of wind). There was a tidal effect as well with the current flowing between the main island (Langkawi and a smaller island in front. Each day as a the team we analyzed all the data from the racecourse and all the variables that could play an influential role in the races.

C) Fleet Championship Stage

Day 1:

The wind blew from a North Easterly direction of 90° starting at 7 knots for the first race and shifting to 60° and dropping to 3-4 knots on the second race. Conditions were extremely unstable due to the characteristics of the location . Different wind pressures throughout the race course was the main characteristic of the day. Dylan Passmore had a 4th and a 16th to end up 14th after Day #1.

Day 2:

Three more races were sailed in winds ranging from 1-9 knots in very shifty conditions and relatively flat water. The results of the team improved slightly mainly because an improvement on the starts, and better understanding of the race course . Wind kept on dropping towards midday with extremely high temperatures (43° C) that made focusing on the boat a difficult and key element for this type of sailing. Race 5A finished with 1-2 knots with the current aligned with the wind. Lots of boats did not managed to crossed the finishing line within time limit. Race 5B was abandoned due to lack of wind. This race was then re-sailed 3 hours later with a breeze coming from the SW at around 6-7 knots. Best result of the day was achieved by Sam Blackburn with a 3rd in race 4. After 5 races completed best Australians were Doug Campbell 18th and Sam Blackburn 20th.

Day 3:

On the third day of racing the wind started at 90° from the NE at around 9-10 knots and dropped to 2-3 knots for the 3rd and last race of the day. Several squalls past through the race course increasing the wind to a max of 16 knots but due to lack of visibility no races were started.

Day 4:

Very atypical day in Langkawi. On the last 8 days sailing it usually paid off to sail towards the middle- middle left side of the course as there was more pressure of wind plus better angles on port tack closer to the shore. This did not happen as most pressure

remained mostly far right of the course. Our team sailed in a conservative approach that did not pay off as they rarely hit the right layline. Not a very good day for the team as all the team dropped in overall results.

D) Team Racing:

Top 16 teams were seeded depending on the first 5 fleet races. Australia managed to qualify on 4th position which meant a slight advantage on the draw. The course to be used was the "S", that is the one that has been used up lately.

The first race of the day was against UAE winning comfortably 1-2-3-4. The second race was against the host country Malaysia the race was won with a winning combination of 1-2-5-8 and allowed us to step onto 3rd round against the favorites Thailand. Australia won the start but better boat speed in light conditions meant that the Thais rounded the top mark 1-2-3 and never more to be seen. As this draw allows to lose once we went against Japan we beat them clearly at the start and win comfortably 1-2-3. Next race was against Singapore meaning that already we were on the top 4, By winning we secured 3rd and one more race to reach the grand finale. Unfortunately we lost by a narrow margin of 17 against 19 points.

In my point of view very creditable result coming in 4th place behind 3 World Top Nations that are preparing long time ago very professionally towards their Asian Games to be held next year. It gives me the feeling that although they are still stronger teams especially in light wind, the gap between us and them has narrowed.

E) Results:

<http://www.optiworld.org/09asiansres8.pdf>

E) Conclusions & Recommendations

- Physical and Mental Fitness plays a paramount role, not only for the sailors sailing performance during the event, but also for an appropriate recovery after one week of sailing at the highest level. Long days on the water under very high temperatures and humidity can affect mindset and concentration. Last day of the regatta some sailors were not in the best mindset affecting their decision making process therefore affecting their overall performance. Most of our sailors are used to weekend regattas that means 2 days of racing and then going back to their homes after racing.

- The Main Weakness of Australian Optimist sailors is sailing with light winds and tidal effects. Nowadays Asian level is the highest with these types of conditions. Competing against them is quite hard, as they are used to, they sail 5-6 times a week and they are rarely over 42 kilos as they have different body-builds. We should create more interaction with these countries to lift our level. Options are Singapore, Thailand and Malaysian Nationals and in terms of distance they could be affordable. The 5 Sailors that qualify for the worlds should go to Langkawi before December to train in this type of conditions. We have been invited to stay for free at Sailing centre plus free boats for sailors to train with the Malaysian Team.

- Being the starts critically important at this level of competition all starts were recorded so all the members of the team could see not only their mistakes but also their progress throughout the event. This was useful for the team as everyone improved their starts, specially their acceleration and holding their lane in the first meters off the start. Acceleration and timing off the line with light winds need to be worked on the future.

- The team spirit and discipline shown by the team in all aspects (conduct, trainings, concentration, etc) was excellent at all times. The experience of racing with the best junior sailors in the world is a unique experience for the rest of their lives, it has changed their view of competitive sailing and they have learnt that they can be at the top with discipline and effort.

- All the sailors in the team have excellent potential for being at the top of any competitive sailing class, they just need to continue training and getting the maximum experience as possible. Two members of the team had just 11 years old, invaluable experience for them towards the future.
 - Finally I would like to thank AIODA for the support given, RPYC for their continuous support, KC Agerup as the Team Leader and Julie Blackburn which helped on the Measurement day for all the support given in this event, , all the parents for helping at all times and the sailors for being excellent sailors and people.

DIEGO FIGUEROA
AUSTRALIA COACH