

2006 World Marblehead Championship

Friday 2nd June

Once again we were blessed with ideal conditions: a repeat of the last two days. The westerly wind was 4-7 mph for the first heat of Race 30, but then increased to B, C and C2 rig strength during the morning. The conditions were a little warmer with plenty of sunshine, but it was still cold. Competitors had by now become used to walking briskly to windward and running after their boats on the offwind legs. The French umpire Bernadette Delbart commented on the strain of the double marathon for the officials, with a kilometre to walk each heat!

Race 30 went to Martin Roberts GBR who continued to dominate the windward legs and at the end of the long beats was often in the lead. However 'Baby SLO', Jure Zule SLO overtook Martin on the last leg of Race 31 in a very exciting finish. Martin made no mistake in Race 32, this time having a fine scrap with Chris Harris GBR. The first 3 heats of Race 33 were sailed, by which time it was obvious that another race could not be started before the 3 o'clock deadline. The opportunity was taken to gather everyone involved in the event for a group photograph. This added to the climax of the final 'A' heat, because although by this time Martin was already the new World Champion and didn't need sail again, there was still a lot to sail for in the next few places, as only 4 points separated the next three boats and 10 points separated 5th, 6th and 7th.

Zvonko Jelacic CRO won Race 33 from his fellow Croatian, Ante Kovacevic. They were then tied on points and the tie was broken in Ante's favour as he had 7 wins to Zvonko's 5. The other leading places were unchanged except that by a finishing third Chris Harris took 6th place away from Zure who could only manage 11th. This was a physically demanding event and after 132 heats everybody was pleased to stop sailing! SYRPH and the new umpiring system, RSD Addendum Q, was a huge success and as a result only ONE boat to boat protest was taken to a protest hearing.

Not only did the weeks sailing go superbly well, but it was rounded off very well at the prize presentation buffet at the North Euston Hotel. Every superlative was used in praise of the sailing, sportsmanship, friendliness, organisation, Fleetwood, MYA, ISAF RSD and of course, the Champion, Martin Roberts. Many thought that it was the best World Championship ever and that the losers were not those at the event, but those Marblehead sailors who didn't take part. Paul Elvstrom's words about sportsmanship were quoted at the initial briefing and at this event his words were truly acted out: "It is great to win in yacht racing but only if the other competitors join in the pleasure".

Daily reports by Roger Stollery PRO