

Miracle sails to glory

Tony van Thiel to the fore once again in Oman's premier sailing event

Times News Service

MUSCAT | The Truckoman 2010 Commodore's Cup was sailed for the third time last weekend off the Ras Al Hamra Recreation Centre beach. 13 crews competed in the event organised by the Ras Al Hamra Boat Club (RAHBC) with participants from Castaways (Civil Aviation Recreation Club) and RAHBC.

The Commodore's Cup is one of Oman's largest races for catamaran sailing boats (twin hulls, short name: cat) up to 21ft. The boats race on handicap as defined by the SCHRS (Small Catamaran Handicap Rating System) adjusted for local conditions (age/condition of boats and ranking of the Helm). The handicap system allows larger (faster) and smaller (slower) catamarans to compete in the same race. The finishing time is adjusted by the handicap factor of the boat. This way a smaller boat can still win a race from a larger and faster one.

Fast boats

Catamarans are the fastest type of sailing boats giving sailors (helm and crew) an exhilarating experience. The fleet consisted of 11 Hobie 16's (a 16ft catamaran which is also the most popular boat worldwide), one Nacra 18 ft and a 20ft Hobie Miracle.

The Cup was initiated in 2007 as a farewell race to the then RAHBC Commodore Volker Vahrenkamp. The 2007 race was won by the new Commodore Tony van Thiel mainly because of his boat, a 20ft Hobie Miracle. The Miracle also won him the 2009 and 2010 events. In 2011 his handicap will be adjusted such that he will not be able to win again.

The races started at noon with light but increasing easterly wind promising a perfect



The winners: Johnny de Leeuw, left, and Tony van Thiel, right, with Truckoman Group General Manager Chris Fidler and the Commodore's Cup. Below, the fleet in action during one of the races at Ras Al Hamra beach.



day on the water. The course was set between RAHBC and Fahal Island and consisted of an Olympic Triangle/Sausage pattern. The first race set the scene with the Miracle (sailed by Tony van Thiel — RAHBC Commodore and Johnny de Leeuw) crossing first in 27 min but with the Nacra sailed by Paul-Henri van Thiel with Stephen Rice as crew following close behind. The Nacra has a higher handicap but crossed the line 1 min 30 sec later which was too much to gain first place. Giles and Jules Brinsley from Castaways came third on the first Hobie-16.

The second race was going the same way but Paul-Henri and Stephen made a mistake

when trying to retrieve the large red spinnaker. It took them a long time to recover the sail and they ended last spoiling their chances for the rest of the event. Newcomers David and Kariénke Boeyinga took 2nd place. Giles and Jules came 3rd re-enforcing their overall position.

Just at the end of the second race the Oman Sail X-40 came past. For a moment it was thought he was joining the race but that would have been "unreasonable". The X40 is twice as big as the Miracle and super fast. It was a beautiful sight to see. By the time the 3rd race started the wind had really picked up strongly and the boat speeds increased dra-

matically. Every cat was "twin wiring" with both helm and crew standing in the trapeze to keep them upright. First place was again for the Miracle but second place was now taken by Tony Males and Neville Hallett from Castaways and Klaus and Johanna Mueller (a Father/Daughter team) ended as third. For the 4th race the course was changed to a "Round Fahal Island" triangle. This gave the fast cats a chance to go full speed on the 5 km long run to the island and back again to the finish. The strong wind conditions resulted in a number of capsizes but these boats were quickly recovered to continue the race. The Miracle won again with Tony and Neville coming in as second followed by Giles and Jules.

Overall winners of the day were Tony and Johnny on the Miracle, winning the trophy for the third time in a row. The 2 Castaway teams did very well and with a 2nd and 3rd overall when all the handicaps had been applied.

Tony van Thiel, the RAHBC Commodore, handed out the prizes and thanked the Officers Of the Day (OOD's) Stephen Martin assisted by Maartje and Ronald Wortel for the first rate management of the races. Tony finished by thanking Chris Fidler and Lindsay Ogilvy of Truckoman for their sponsorship of the event.

Final results: 1. Tony van Thiel/Johnny de Leeuw (Miracle-20); 2. Giles/Jules Brinsley (H-16); 3. Tony Males/Neville Hallett (H-16); 4. Klaus/Johanna Mueller (H-16); 5. David Boeyinga/Kariénke Querner (H-16); 6. Aly Brandenburg/Mariette Verdaasdonk (H-16); 7. Les/Louise Taylor (H-16); 8. Paul-Henri van Thiel/Stephen Rice (Nacra 5.5); 9. Gary/Jackie Lanier (H-16); 10. Alex Rice/John Ambrose (H-16); 11. Frank/Charlotte Wolters (H-16); 12. Robert/Lucy Ambrose (H-16); 13. Victor Ogg/Osman Bilal (H-16).



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