



CHAMPION: David Aziz from Volvo-MHD and Mohsin Al Busaidi from Oman Sail presenting the Rolling Trophy to Douwe Sickler with Tony Van Thiel, looking on. Right, an action from the National championship.

Douwe is national laser champion

24 sailors participated in the event sponsored by Volvo-MHD

Times News Service

MUSCAT — Douwe Sickler topped with nine points in the MHD LLC Sponsored Volvo 2009 Oman National Championship for Lasers (one man Olympic class sailing dinghies) from the beach off the Ras al Hamra Recreation Centre last weekend.

24 Sailors competed in the event organised by the Oman Laser Association and Ras Al Hamra Boat Club (RAHBC) with participants from Royal Oman Navy, Castaways (Civil Aviation Recreation Club), Oman Sail and RAHBC.

Second place was for Tony van Thiel (16 points) with Stephen Rice following closely as third with 19 points.

Rashid Khalfan al Yahyai from RNO-Wudum was the best Omani sailor with an 11th place overall. It is the third time he takes this place. Abdulhakeem Al-Keyumi from Castaways came second. Last year they scored the opposite

with Hakim on first and Rashid on second place. Mafoud al Zarafi from RNO-Wudum took the third place. He only sailed 2 races and would have gone on much stronger but hurt himself during a capsize after which he had to abandon further participation.

Strong winds

The first racing day saw very strong easterly winds throughout the day. Wind speeds up to 20 knots (force 5) created very demanding conditions which only part of the fleet could handle.

The first race started with 22 sailors. Only 14 were able to complete the course. The number of finishers reduced in every race to only 7 in the fifth and final event of the day.

Sailing a Laser in strong winds is physically demanding. One has to be very fit! At the end of day-1 Douwe had 2 wins and was already 3 points clear of Tony. On Friday the wind was again blowing strong. Just

a notch less power full than the day before, creating excellent sailing conditions which most of the fleet managed well. The lighter sailors wisely decided to use the smaller radial and 4.7 sails instead of the big standard sail. 3 races were held and Douwe won them all.

A fierce battle for second, third and fourth position took place in every race between Tony, Stephen and Dave Clark. Tony ended up as second followed by Stephen and Dave.

It was good to see the participation of 4 youngsters aged 14 to 16 years. Alexander Rice (14) took the "Best Youth" ranking (7th overall). A remarkable feat considering he only sailed on the first day. Paul-Henri van Thiel (15) finished 9th, Tim Street (16) on 15th and Robert van Eden (14) on 17th position.

Prices sponsored by VOLVO-MHD and Oman Sail, were awarded to all participants by Mohsin al Busaidi (Oman Sail) and David Aziz of Volvo-

MHD. Tony van Thiel (OLA Chair and event organiser) thanked the officers of the day (OOD's) Fred Rourke, Stephen Martin and Mariette Verdaasdonk for the first rate management of the races. The RAHBC sailing captain, Cees van Eden congratulated Tony with the excellent organisation of the championship.

Good support

Volvo has long history in their link with sailing in the world and has been the title sponsor for this event for the second year. David Aziz thanked the organisation and expressed his commitment for further support next year.

The Oman Sail Academy has started training young Omanies and it is very likely that a strong National squad of Laser sailors will be competing in the Laser Nationals next year. The 2010 Asian Beach Games which will be held in Oman will also feature Lasers as one of the sailing events.