



Fullpower Melges 24 World Championship 2007

Santa Cruz Yacht Club

Santa Cruz, Calif., USA

May 3-12

May 8, 2007

Tuesday's weather: wind 10-15k W, seas 2-4 ft., temp. 75 F.
Wednesday's forecast: wind 10-15k W, seas 2-3 ft., temp. 75 F., dense fog AM, patchy fog later.

Ayres, Ullman win but French and Italians lead Melges 24s

SANTA CRUZ, Calif.---Two veterans and longtime rivals who learned to sail in the gentle zephyrs at Newport Beach, Calif. turned the tables on their roots Tuesday when they won the opening races of the Fullpower Melges 24 World Championship, hosted by Santa Cruz Yacht Club, on a bright and breezy Monterey Bay.

But consistency paid larger dividends. As Bruce Ayres scored 1-7 finishes and Dave Ullman went 21-1, France's Francois Brenac was 2-4 at the helm of Benjamin Cohen's entry, which left him atop the leader board in a tie with the defending champion, Italy's Nicola Celon (4-2), driving for Amadori Ezio.

Brenac said, "We tried to be very careful at the starts. There were a lot of OCS (on course side) starts, and it's very difficult to make a good race because the right side [of the course] is good and there's nothing to gain going left. On the right side, at the end the wind shifts [in a lift] to the left, and the sea is more flat."

Ayres shares third place with Brian Porter of Winnetka, Ill., while Ullman shares seventh with Team Pegasus colleague Mark (Crusty) Christensen.

A day earlier Dave Ullman had assured doubters that the challenging venue would return to its reputation in time for the competition, and he proved not only a prophet but a winner in cool west winds blowing 10 to 15 knots.

"Of course, it's Santa Cruz," Ullman said. "It can't go many days without wind."

After Ayres won the first race, Ullman won the second, both leading at every mark.

What's more, Ayres and his totally Corinthian (i.e. amateur) crew of Jon Pinckney, David Shelton and Don Smith momentarily stole the thunder of the high-profile performers in the fleet of 58 boats. A Corinthian team has never won a Melges 24 Worlds, and there are 24 competing here, but, of course, there are still four days and eight races remaining for the stallions to find their strides.

Ayres said, "We got off the line fast and had great boat speed. It's easy when you get off the line fast. The important thing is that we stayed focused. This is a long regatta and the wind is going to keep blowing harder. It is a matter of staying focused."

The racing started right on time at 12:30 p.m. with only one hiccup: a typical cavalry charge by overanxious competitors who for the past week had been fine-tuning their racing machines for the magic moment. Principal race officer Hank Stuart was forced to signal a general recall, followed by a second successful start under the warning of the "I" flag---any boat over early must go around one end of the very long end to re-start properly.

Still, a few paid that penalty---two of them painfully. Samuel (Shark) Kahn, who won the Worlds in 2003 at age 13, and Gabrio Zandona, driving Giovanni Maspero's competitive Joe Fly, jumped the start in both races. Although all they had to do to re-start was to circle the committee boat in the middle of the long line, the delay left them far back in the pack. Kahn wound up with a 22 and 47 for the day, Zandona with a 25 and 48. They can toss their worst scores after six races but will have to swallow the others.

The first race---two laps around a 2.0-nautical mile windward-leeward course set almost due west at a steady 260 degrees---started in 11 knots of wind and built to 15 at the windward mark, from where Ayres led the fleet down the offshore side to the gate, then back up the shore side where the breeze past the northern point of the bay offered a free lift.

The second race---three laps around---started in 10 knots and followed similar a similar tactical pattern.

Overall, the seas were choppy but without the deep, queasy swells that marked the Pre-Worlds last weekend.

As for Wednesday, Ullman said: "We just hope it blows harder. Which it's going to, which is good. A couple of days from now it's going to blow really hard. Tomorrow about five knots more. Thursday it will be cranking."

The leaders

(After 2 of 10 races)

1. Tie between Francois Bernac, France, 2-4, and Nicola Celon, Italy, 4-2, 6 points.
2. Tie between Bruce Ayres, Newport Beach, Calif., 1-7, and Brian Porter, Winnetka, Ill., 3-5, 8.
5. John Pollard, UK, 8-6, 14.
6. Othmar Mueller von Blumencron, Great Falls, Va., 6-9, 15.
7. Tie between Mark Christensen, Santa Cruz, Calif., 16-3, and Dave Ullman, Santa Ana, 18-1, 19.



Francois Brenac (r.) runs alongside Brian Porter



Bruce Ayres surfs to win



Michelle Brachet and Eamonn O'Nolan have two plans

Photo gallery

Regatta information



Entry list

International Melges 24 class information



Visit the Santa Cruz Yacht Club



Visit Fullpower Technologies



Melges 24 world champions

2006, Hyeres, France
Nicola Celon, Italy

2005, Key Largo, Fla.

9. Chris Larson, Annapolis, Md., 12-8, 20.
10. Tie between John Pink, UK, 7-14, and Don Jesberg, Mill Valley, Calif., 12-8, 21.

A love story wedded to the UK Olympics

Eamonn O'Nolan's boat from the UK finished second overall to Chris Larson in the Pre-Worlds tune-up last weekend and tied with Bruce Ayres of Newport Beach, Calif. at the top of the Corinthian division. His fiancée, Michelle Brachet, placed fifth overall on another boat. But there's more to the story.

Their boats are crewed by young British sailors ages 17 to 24 and driven by John Gimson and John Pink, respectively. Besides Brachet, another female member of the team is Holly Scott, 17. Three are members of Britain's Olympic development squad, targeting the 2012 Olympic sailing in the UK at Weymouth.

"We wanted to give them experience in different boats," O'Nolan said.

O'Nolan runs Unlimited Sailing, which specializes in racing, RYA courses and team building (<http://www.unlimitedsailing.com/home/>). He has a third Melges 24 in the UK for the same program.

It started, O'Nolan said, at Cork Week in Ireland when Brachet, racing on a Farr 45, met some of the young sailors in a pub after racing "and put a team together for the [Melges 24] Worlds."

"She had never been on a Melges 24," O'Nolan said.

The Santa Cruz YC hosts a full schedule of activities ashore. The hospitality includes on-site concessions run by local businesses offering specialty coffee and pastries by Java Junction, pre-ordered race lunches by Erik's DeliCafé and bottled water by Crystal Springs, available by the case.

There also are post-race social events, with complimentary beverage most evenings provided by sponsors like Sierra Nevada, Pusser's Rum and Seabright Brewery. Hors d'oeuvres are available each night, with dinners on two nights.

There are daily prizes for top-place finishers, sponsored by Harken, and giveaways from Pusser's Rum, West Marine, Starbrite and New England Ropes. There also are raffle prizes, including a custom Melges 24 transport cover from Lohmann Sails and Covers. North Sails is providing skipper's bags, and all participants received discount tickets to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

All regatta information is available at www.melges24worlds2007.com. Further information about the International Melges 24 Class is available from www.melges24.com

Information on Melges 24 events in the U.S. is available at <http://www.usmelges24.com/>

Fullpower Technologies is a new wireless nanotechnology biotech company based in Santa Cruz.

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James Spithill, Australia

2004, Marstrand, Sweden
Sebastian Col, France

2003, San Francisco
Samuel (Shark) Kahn, U.S.

2002, Travemunde, Germany
Harry Melges, U.S.

2001, Key West, Fla.
Flavio Favini, Switzerland

2000, La Rochelle, France
Georgio Zuccoli, Italy

1999, Long Beach, California
Vince Brun, U.S.

1998, Torquay, England
Vince Brun, U.S.

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