

WORLD RM CHAMPIONSHIPS

With a RC-Marblehead to the Cape of Good Hope, or Sail Africa world Marblehead Championships in Cape Town 1994.

Christian Lindholm reports.

The race week

The 1994 worlds were held at Zeekoevlei a rather large lake 30 km south of Cape Town. The host was an old yacht club ZVYC, with a rather active dingy fleet. The regatta was held between the dry hot summer and the windy wet winter. The weather was still warm for us 23-27c° in the shadow, this of course led to rather many red noses.

The sailing water that reminded me of pea-soup, was fortunately quite free of weed. The prevailing wind was over the club house, to get steady winds a 60m long jetty was built, giving better winds with nice shifts. The wind was the most variable I have experienced in recent championships. I had brought six suits of sails and I needed them all. Of the 30 heats appr. 20 were sailed with A-suits and the rest equally spread among the rest of the suits.

The South Africans were thrilled to organise the event and had put a great deal of effort into it. The political situation and the time of the event had limited the participants to 36 of which 15 where South Africans. The Brits formed the biggest overseas team with 10 boats. We knew at the start that these skippers where the ones to look out for. With the defending World Champion, Graham Bantock and current European Champion, Chris Dicks we knew it would be tough race. Fortunately two Scandinavians had managed to get their boats out of the ice, Torvald Klem from Norway and Christian Lindholm from Finland. Christian had been spying on the Brits during the winter due to his work stationed in London. The good German light wind team with Klaus Schröder and Werner Gerhard had shown up, accompanied by the charming Elke Wissman. Team France with Rémi and Bernadette Bres had also arrived, so it was definitely going to be a good race.

The race started on Sunday, with a 30 knot gale blowing over the 2 km long lake creating big waves. I thought, now I can justify spending £100 on a C3 rig. After tuning this rig, which of course never had been used, I was ready to race. The first race was great fun. My boat really enjoyed these big waves and strong winds, so did the UK team winning all except one race. Phillip Playle started with three consecutive firsts followed by Martin Roberts with two seconds and a first. Despite the gale, the first day only gave us 9 heats, which wasn't enough, the organisers promised to speed up the racing and this they did. Monday started according to the old saying 'after the storm comes the calm'. The direction was the same, but this time it was only a very light wind, the kind that gets Chris Dicks' cigarette smoke to rise vertically. We got started and now it was the Norwegian Klem at the top, I was fifth. The next was won by

Bantock, the following by Klem. The fourth race was won by Roberts. The leaders had started to form themselves. I myself being a nice guy went down to say hi to our friends in B-fleet, I was not on a long visit but with our system an expensive one. I suddenly found myself on 8th place instead of 5th, well I knew it was going to be a long race and lots could happen, which it did. We had three boats lead the race, Klem, Roberts and Bantock. Klem started very strongly, and according to himself was a tourist, maybe it would have been best to remain a tourist. Torvald started to cut the corners leaving too small margins, so he had to spin several 360°, at the same time Martin sailed like a king gathering only 3,4 points in 5 races, so it was now Martin at the front. What we didn't notice was Bantock and Playle, who sailed very consistent making sure of not making a trip to the friends in B. The wind was light and John Cleave, who had lived on pain killers due to a 'funny looking' toothache had suddenly managed to get the right combination of preparates, came flying from B heat to win two consecutive A-heats. At the same time Phillip Playle and Bantock were following the smell of the 'pills' getting two seconds and two thirds. The difference between the top four was very small. Graham had climbed to second and Torvald was chased by Phillip Playle. It was time for the Scandinavian team to have a 'tactics'- brief by the Happy Hour-beer fountain. This helped and Torvald was cooling down. I was battling with Chris Dicks trying to catch him and by Thursday lunch time the difference was down to about 8 points after getting a first in the A-fleet. A couple of races later Chris did his first visit to B-fleet, by that time I was already well acquainted with them spending two races with them.

But then we got to Friday, a day that must have been Grahams birthday present, he got only 1,7 points in six races. This gave him a lead that was unbeatable. The fight continued for second, but always when T. Klem got too close it felt as Martin could squeeze just an inch from his already skinny boat. Towards the end Mark Dennis sailed very well and managed to win an A-fleet on Saturday. The difference between Mark Dennis and myself was down to a mere .8 or so before the final race. I chose my high B rig for that race and at the beginning of the race it was perfect, as the race continued the wind dropped. I covered Mark all the way and managed to beat him by two places. What we didn't know at the time was that we got a 4th discard at 30 races making the margin bigger in the end. After a favourable, frustrating and fatiguing week I was happy to finish this race that I think was the best organised event of any championships.

What made the Sail Africa race such as success?

What made the race so good? First of all the weather, good wind, lots of sun. Secondly a professional big organisation with the right people in charge. Thirdly a wonderful clubhouse with great healthy cheap catering (free lunch for participants!). Finally, an interesting evening programme, which is important for spouses.

What could have been better? The water was on the edge of being dangerously dirty, there was a notice in the local newspaper that couple of dogs had died after drinking water from Zeekoevlei.

I have always preferred sailing places where we can have an elevated sailing area or a possibility to walk the course. I think it is of paramount importance to increase the number of boats in every heat and to be able to do this we would need much better visibility, not a 30 sq. metre pontoon level with the water!

As I mentioned earlier it was sometimes very difficult to see the marks, and I as well as other skipper missed them several times. There are several older skippers that don't have very good eye vision, it is not fair to make the sport unattractive to people with bad vision, when you can at no extra cost eliminate the problem.

What has happened with the boats since New York?

The worlds in New York were the breakthrough of the narrow British boat. The Paradox and the Roar Edge made their first appearance. It is not news that skinny boats are fast in light weather, but can they handle the heavy blows? The answer is yes, they paradoxically go extremely fast in the heavy stuff as well. This is something Bob Sterne and several other promoters of skinny boats has known for years, but since they haven't been able to prove their superiority they have difficulty claiming the fame.

This year we saw the second generation skinny boats, with Martin Roberts' Stark with which he had won the race of champions a couple weeks before. The problem with these skinny boats is that they are difficult to sail and especially tack, things that refinement of both sailing ability and gear should eliminate. A lot of work has been done on the Paradox, making it the best "industrially" manufactured RC-Marblehead in the world. This is proven by the fact that skippers as Phillip Playle, Mark Dennis and Keith Skipper sailed extremely well with something that can be bought. The good thing with this is that it opens up the sport to sailing enthusiasts that have not the patience with building the yachts. The problem is that the supply of the top racing yachts is very limited, thus evidently the price is high.

What where my impression of the top yachts:

The Paradox

A full fledged racer, where the feel/looks of sturdy British agricultural equipment has been developed into top class racing equipment. A beautiful hull topped with simple well-engineered rigs, beautifully cut sails, and underneath thin stiff profiles and smooth lead.

The Stark

The skinniest boat ever to reach a major trophy in the Worlds. Martin's approach is wonderful, it is home-made, original. He proves that money is not the only way to success. His boat is



Keith Skipper, above, sailed his Bantock Paradox into 8th place at the South Africa World RM race. He is seen here practising in the cold March winds on Guildford's lake. Rob Vice, also at Guildford, has taken to the Stollery "fanclub" which also includes Frenchman Remi Bres, and placed 9th at the Worlds.



daringly fast downwind, with the narrow beam and deep thin profiles with moderately light lead. It is not fun to be chased by this boat.

The Berlingo

One of the worlds most successful model yachts. First appeared at the 1988 Worlds in Berlin. Winning the 1990 worlds, second 1992 and now third. This boat has never been produced in great numbers, so it would be impossible to really determine its full potential. Torvald has on his boat combined the best of the world. From the bottom up: A solid foundation built on Norwegian lead, topped with a British fin, on a Norwegian built French hull stands German aerodynamic rig with beautiful Norwegian sails.

The Magick 3

The European champion from last year, a narrow fast all roundboat. Chris has a beautifully engineered radial boom that really makes the boat fast to windward.

The Logic

This fifth generation of Logic, the oldest design in the top ten, designed in 1985, still proves to be a very good all round boat. Being the heaviest boat in the top ten with 4,0kg of lead it is powered with effective Finnish sails. In B suit the boat gets really going, and has a nice stable attitude on the water. The Logic proves that by good engineering and good yachtmanship, a boat is not old after the first year after its introduction.

The Roar Edge

The latest Stollery design is a masterpiece of simplicity. Imagine tightening one bowsie when you take the rig out of the rigbag and you know that the trim is there, can it be more simple? I don't think so. The boat is at its best in the tall suit, when the wind increases the boat loses some of its edge, but a pleasant sight on the water.

Top Ten Designs

1. Graham Bantock	GBR	41,8	Paradox
2. Martin Roberts	GBR	65,2	Stark
3. Torvald Klem	NOR	71,6	Berlingo
4. Phillip Payle	GBR	85,8	Paradox
5. Chris Dicks	GBR	120,1	Magick 3
6. Christian Lindholm	FIN	173,4	Logic
7. Mark Dennis	GBR	177,8	Paradox
8. Keith Skipper	GBR	204,0	Paradox
9. Rob Vice	GBR	229,7	Roar Edge
10. Paul Tickner	GBR	236,7	Roar Edge