



Race Week News

ACURA KEY WEST 2007 • Presented by Nautica • Volume XX, Number 6 • Saturday, January 20, 2007



Esmeralda, a newly-launched Club Swan 42 owned by Makoto Uematsu, has a clear lane in the IRC 3 fleet during Friday's ninth and final race at Acura Key West 2007, presented by Nautica. *Esmeralda*, designed by German Frers, finished first or second in all eight races that counted to edge Stephane Neve's *Sinergia 40 Spirit of Malouen III* by a point. "I am very surprised and very happy. Being the first of this type of boat to race in a major regatta was heavy pressure. I give all the credit to (tactician) Mr. Ken Read and the rest of the team," said Uematsu.

Champagne Sailing

By Staff Writers

Acura Key West 2007 ends with a world class collection of champions. Five stunning days of balmy tropical weather and quality racing between competitors from around the globe were the hallmarks of this year's regatta. Key West is where amateur race crews have that rare chance to face off with the sport's elite. A crown prince, sailing superstars, world champions and eager new competitors were all part of a week of champagne sailing.

The week wrapped up with a steady breeze and the usual tropical sunshine. Coconut palms rustled in the wind while people, their watches set to the laid-back hour of island time, sipped frosty margaritas on the boardwalk. The lively sounds of a steel drum band wafted over the turquoise harbor while boats engaged in the final showdown. Here, in this gem of an island, Hemmingway wrote, Audubon painted, silver-screen movies were filmed and

the greatest sailors race.

ESPN commentator Gary Jobson stated it accurately and perfectly in one of his daily reports on Acura Key West 2007, presented by Nautica.


Jobson described the weather in Key West this week as "stuck on gorgeous."

Gorgeous indeed and how fitting the 20th anniversary of the renowned international regatta would deliver the type of conditions the southernmost point of the United States is famous for.

A fleet of 260 boats carrying more than 2,000 sailors enjoyed sunny skies and temperatures in the 80s all five days of the regatta. Adding to the spectacular scene were top-notch sailing conditions – steady 10-14 knot winds and flat water off the Conch Republic.

As the Sunset Celebration, a local Key West tradition, went into full swing, new champions were announced.

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ACURA

ADVANCE.

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January 20, 2007 Volume XX, Number 6

A Premiere Racing & Key West Citizen Publication

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Peter De Ridder sat in Monty's Raw Bar Friday afternoon sipping a Heineken and kicking himself. De Ridder and his crew aboard *Mean Machine* finished strong in Mumm 30 class – notching a bullet and finishing no worse than third in the final six races. However, a fifth and a sixth sustained the initial two days of racing wound up costing the Dutch entry, which lost a tie-breaker with *Southern Sun* for overall victory in the 10-boat class. In hindsight, De Ridder blamed those two poor results on the fact the team did not clear seaweed from its rudder on Monday and Tuesday.

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Division 1

Alinghi was still in its berth at The Galleon docks when the fleet left the harbor on Friday morning. Skipper Ernesto Bertarelli and crew clinched overall victory in the Farr 40 class on Thursday and decided to get a head start on returning to their America's Cup base in Dubai, Saudi Arabia.

Bertarelli's victory in the 17-boat Farr 40 class led Switzerland to victory in the International Team competition. *Artemis*, a Swan 601 owned by Torbjorn Tornqvist, placed third in IRC 1 class while Franco Rossini's *Blu Moon* took third in Melges 24 to complete a strong showing by Team Switzerland, which earned the Nautica Watches Trophy by a 4 ½ points over Team France.

The Mumm 30 class winner was decided on the final day. *Southern Sun*, the Australian entry skippered by Bruce Eddington, held onto its lead by the skin of its teeth. Dutchman Peter De Ridder and the *Mean Machine* crew did all they could to put the pressure on Aussies by winning Race 9.

Southern Sun was in sixth place with 100 meters remaining on the last leg, but picked off a boat and placed fifth – good enough to finished tied with *Mean Machine* on points. Eddington won the tiebreaker by virtue of posting more first place results in the regatta.

"We have a new team with three young guys who are first timers to the Mumm 30. They all did a great job and we improved throughout the week," said De Ridder, who has announced his intention to mount a Volvo Ocean Race campaign.

Division 2

"This was the perfect Key West. We had terrific weather, wonderful conditions, fantastic race management and tremendous competition," IRC 1 champion Dan Meyers said. "Hats off to Peter Craig and his entire team for giving us sailors another great regatta."

Meyers and his high-level crew aboard *Numbers* won a week-long battle royale with Edgar Cato and *Hissar*. The two Farr-designed 60-footers entered the ninth and final race separated by just two points and predictably engaged in a match race duel.

Hissar led until the second downwind leg, but *Numbers* rolled over its rival and held the lead during the upwind finish. "It basically took until the last leeward mark rounding. There were a heap of tacks and gybes thrown in today to keep everyone on their toes. It was a heck of a lot of fun," Meyers said.

Hamish Pepper, an America's Cup winner with Team New Zealand, called tactics aboard *Numbers*. Meyers had high praise for his entire crew, which also included such Volvo Ocean Race and America's Cup veterans as John Barnett, Tim Dawson, Jerry Kirby, John MacGowan and Erle Williams.

"I cannot express how grateful I am to the crew. We had one guy fly in from Dubai, another from Spain. Guys came from New Zealand and California," Meyers said. "To see the smiles on their faces at the end of the week is very rewarding. We try to have a relaxed atmosphere onboard and I think everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves."

IRC 2 class also came down to the last race with skipper Colm Barrington steering *Magic Glove* to a second place finish in Race 9 to secure overall victory. The good-natured Irishman was making his Key West debut with a recently-launched Ker 50 and placed first or second in six of nine races against a loaded fleet.

"I am absolutely ecstatic about this result," Barrington said. "We made a lot of changes to the boat over the last few months. We tweaked the rig and got some different sails and it all seemed to work out."

Robert Greenhalgh, a member of the victorious *ABN AMRO* crew in the last Volvo Ocean Race, called tactics aboard *Magic Glove*, which opened the regatta with a sixth then reeled off three straight bullets.

"We came out of the gate with an awful finish, but Robert kept us on the right track and we were fairly consistent the rest of the way," Barrington said. "It was interesting because the TP 52s are so much lighter and quicker. We had to really focus on staying close and saving our time on them."

Magic Glove managed to do exactly that on Friday, finishing second behind *Samba Pa Ti* on corrected time. "Today was champagne sailing in every respect. You're out there on emerald waters with the sun shining brightly and the wind blowing strong.

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It's all quite breathtaking."

Spirit of Malouen III, Frenchman Stephane Neve's Sinergia 40, bagged four bullets and placed second in the class by only one point behind *Esmeralda*. The amateur team was ecstatic to be racing against professionals. When Spirit first arrived in Key West, the team wasn't sure what to expect. "We were encouraged after race one," says helmsman Hugues Destremau. "We are very happy to have been able to sail against professionals. The owner is thrilled."

Yellow Jacket finished behind Andrzej Rojek's Swan 45, *Better Than...*, and above John McLeod's J/133, *Hot Water*. "The French team was tough competition all week," says *Yellow Jacket* mastman John Dodge. "We finished on a high note."

Great crew work allowed Alice Martin's *Painkiller 4* a notable gain in the ranks, settling over *Cracker*, Bryan Lawrence's Ker 11.3, by week's end. No stranger to the sport, Martin has been on boats since the age of three and has ten Key West races under her belt. Thriving on the thrill of the chase, the *Painkiller 4* team sails with such dedication that the hard-working foredeck crew had duct tape holding his torn pants together after the last race. He was more worried about the tape's vivid pink color than anything else.

Three bullets and smooth teamwork put *Wairere*, Pete Hunter's Thompson 30, at the top of the PHRF 1 class. It wasn't easy. The team has been reaching for the top slot in Key West for thirteen years. "We're walking on air," says Hunter, about his team's well deserved win. "We came close a couple of times over the years and we were waiting for this." The week couldn't have been better for *Wairere*. Pleased to be in Key West, bowman Jay Price had just returned from Iraq after working there as a reporter. Also, last year the boat had lost her mast and it took several months to complete repairs.

In second is Robert Ruhlman's 1D35, *Spaceman Spiff*. "This place is beautiful!" tactician, Patrick Wilson said. Robert Hesse's 1D35, *Plowhorse*, settled into third behind Charles Buckner's Texas entry, *BLUE*.

With a name inspired by Brendan Brownyard's rottweiler, *Hell Hound* swapped places with Jeff Gale's *Beautiful World* by week's end. "We hope to be back next year. Not coming would be crazy," Brownyard says.

Erik Wulff's *Endorphin* sailed nose to nose with Hunt Lawrence's J/120, *Peregrine* throughout the week. Third went to *Peregrine* who earned a bullet midweek. "There are terrific sailors on the other boats," Wulff said. "*Cash Flow* did an amazing job. The race committee puts on a world class event." *El Ocaso* placed a bullet on Friday, which set Rick Wesslund's team in the fleet's middle section under *Bounder*, David Hudge's Sydney 36.

Division 3

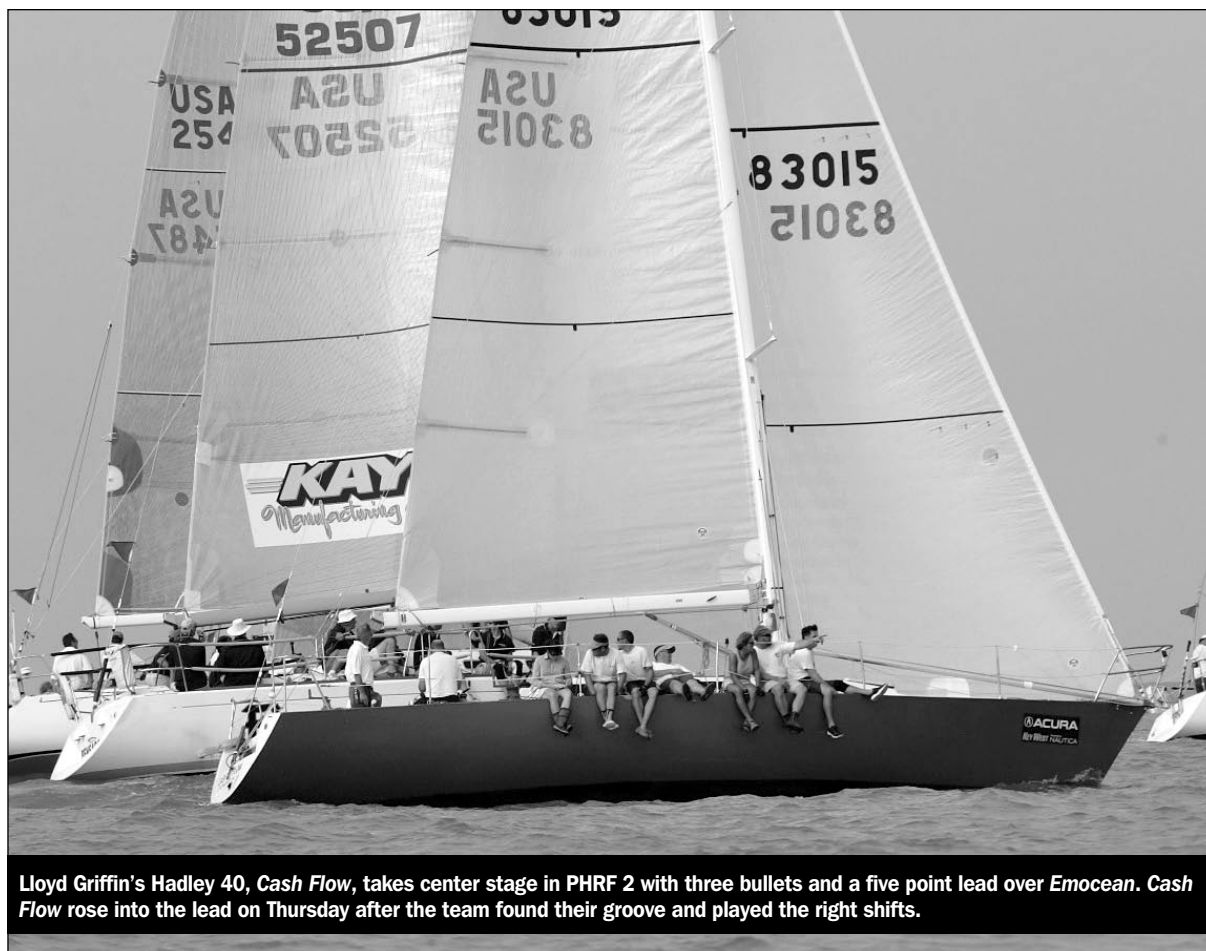
J/105 class was still in doubt going into Friday, but Thomas Coates and his team aboard *Masquerade* shut down any thoughts of a come-from-behind victory by *Convexity*.

"We were talking on the way back to the dock and everyone agreed the competition here this year was better than it's ever been," said Coates, a San Francisco resident. "All the teams are further along on the learning curve. That makes this win even more special than the previous two."

Convexity fouled another boat and was forced to perform a penalty turn, but skipper Donald Wilson still managed to fight his way back to fourth in the final race to finish seven points behind *Masquerade*.

"Our goal today was to sail our own race while also paying attention to where *Convexity* was at all times," Coates said. "This is a great way to finish the regatta. We are absolutely thrilled with the three-peat."

Convexity, Donald Wilson's Chicago entry earned two bullets through the week and placed second, not an easy job in such a sizeable one-design fleet. "The race committee's very organized, very professional," Wilson said. "I love Key West Race Week!" Gerrit Schulze's *Max Power* earns third with Brian Keane's *Savasana* in fourth.



Lloyd Griffin's Hadley 40, *Cash Flow*, takes center stage in PHRF 2 with three bullets and a five point lead over *Emoceen*. *Cash Flow* rose into the lead on Thursday after the team found their groove and played the right shifts.

Tim Wilkes / TimWilkes.com

With a bullet in race eight, Bennet Greenwald's J/105, *Perserverance* landed above Jay Schachne's *Coltrane* and behind Kevin Grainger's *Gumption 3* in the top quarter of the fleet. It's *Perserverance*'s first Key West and it's only the second time the new boat has raced. "We've had a wonderful time," Greenwald says. "The whole weather pattern was like southern California."

Andrew Kennedy's *Bat IV* is a boat name that is over 100-years old. The unique title has so far been carried through four family generations of boat ownership. Bat's current J/105 incarnation will obviously carry on the tradition. Kennedy sums up the exciting week, "There was great wind and great race committee work."

In an electrifying show of consistent sailing Kerry Klingler's *Lifted*, showed positively stellar performance with three bullets this week and an undefeated streak of class firsts. John Storck Jr.'s *Rumor*, Huntington NY, also earned an impressive three bullets and placed second over all, only six points behind *Lifted*.

Magnus Tyreman's *Emotional Rescue* stands in third with Kristen Robinson's well-managed *Angry Chameleon* three points behind in fourth. Sharp teamwork and *Black River Racing*'s two bullets during the week allowed Doug Strebel's team to rise into fifth despite missing the first two races.

Alan Simonini's J/80 *Bone Chillin* is enjoying their first Key West Race Week and had nothing but positive things to say about the experience. "It's been awesome! It's the best regatta I've ever been to. The race committee does a perfect job and the competitors are very friendly." Steve Coneys's J/80, *The Office*, had a week that easily surpasses those long days spent in a real office. "It was a great week," Coneys said.

Division 4

The celebration began on the ride out Friday for the crew aboard *As-If*. After a week in which the boat dominated PHRF-4, never finishing worse than third in a race and completing a 10-point win over *Pipe Dream XIV*, Jeff Kitterman's crew earned the right to unwind.

"We probably sailed our best we have all week."

On a week where light air boats dominated the headlines and leaderboards, Kitterman's heavy air boat disregarded the weather and beat the odds.

"We really had to work hard," Kitterman said. "The crew work was phenomenal. We stayed in phase and stayed consistent. *Esse* beat us twice one day, but we just

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tried to stay consistent."

Consistency ruled the week across Division 4 and nowhere was that more apparent than in PHRF-5 where *Rhumb Punch* ran off eight first place finishes, dropping its only second place to rack up a mere eight points.

It knocked off perennial champion *Liquor Box* for the first time in six years. The conditions played right into the hands of the J/29, but the results infer it was more than weather that played into the performance.

"The last couple of years we were sailing in nothing but 25-plus," said helmsman Clark McKinney, speaking for owner John Edwards who broke his hand early in the week. "We were looking dearly for an event like this one."

But communication from bow to stern was extremely good. We sailed long enough together to feel very comfortable. We didn't miss too many shifts. Every once in a while we'd get on the wrong side, take our lumps, then get back on top of the game."

Its ability to recover left *Liquor Box's* Chuck Simon in admiration.

"They came here prepared," he said. "They wanted it badly. We expect to do well and we were up there, but they were fast. They were just chomping through the water. That was the key. They attacked on us a few times and pushed us over and were a little faster. I have to give them all do respect and praise."

Simon said *Liquor Box* will likely not return to Key West in 2008, putting an end to its dominating 10-year reign which included seven championships.

He pointed to family concerns among his crew members and the aging 25-year old boat.

"We were hoping to go out on high note. It is kind of sad, I told my wife I don't know that I want to shut this program down yet. We have so much fun. Not that we win every race, but we never lose a party."

The party continued for *Jazzy Jr.* in PHRF-6. Needing at least a third place finish to bring home his first-ever Key West title in five trips, Dan Romano's crew ran away with first place on Friday leaving *Island Flyers* behind in second place.

Coming into Friday, Romano was concerned his boat, which sails better in light air, wouldn't be able to hold onto the lead in heavier winds. Despite the breezy conditions, made tightened the back down and flattened the middle to prevail.

But not without a near disaster in-between.

"We did jab a hole in our jib," Romano said. "We poked a hole by the spreader. I thought that would be the end right there. We were going downwind, but were able to tape it up in time."

In PHRF-3, *NKE Electronics*, which clinched the victory Tuesday, finished out the week, finalizing a five point win over *Man-O-War* who put together two first-place finishes to sneak past third-place *Manic*.

In Corsair 28R, *Dealers Choice* continued its unbelievable week by reeling off its eighth straight first place and finalize a dominating performance.

The subclasses have been enjoying their own battles within battles through out the week. "We sailed close in a lot of races," said Dave Curtis of *Manic*. Curtis ranks second in the Beneteau 10R subclass, with Robert Oberg's *NKE Electronics* coming in first overall in PHRF 3. An Impressive six bullets set Bill Hanckel's *Emocean*, on top of the J/120 group with *Peregrine* in second and *El Ocaso* in third for the week. Johnstone's *Polar Express* ruled the J/92s subclass all week with a bullet and a third place overall in PHRF 4. Robert Turner's J/92s, *Cool Change*, earns second with Jay Ostema's *JADE* in third. The top J/24 is none other than local sailor Peter Goldsmith on *Blah Blah Blah* with Kenneth Felis's *Gloria* second in line.

Writers Rebecca Burg, Paul Dehner and Bill Wagner contributed to this story.

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