

Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Vickie Sheen wins Blind Match Racing Championship

Vicki Sheen from Great Britain has won the IFDS Disabled Sailing International Championship, 2011, Homerus Blind Match Racing. Sailing with Nick Donnini on mainsheet and Dennis Manning on headsail, Sheen maintained top position throughout two round robins and the finals.

The Championship was sailed in Sonar keelboats using the Homerus Autonomous Sailing system. Three acoustic buoys, each with a unique signal, defined the course and boats had their own sound signal that changed when on port or starboard tack.

Crews comprised three sailors classified as B1, B2 or B3 under the IBSA Classification System with a collective maximum of 5 IBSA points. All helms were classification B1 and the gender was mixed, with a minimum of one female and one male team member. A sighted observer appointed by the race committee was also aboard.

The event was conducted under Experimental Appendix CBS (Appendix C for Blind Sailing) that has been developed for the ISAF Racing Rules of Sailing to accommodate the specific needs of this sailor group.

IFDS aims to have Blind Match Racing introduced as a Paralympic discipline in 2020 and this event conducted by the Royal Perth Yacht Club was an important test of the rules and the three person format.

"The regatta organisation and race management has been top class", declared IFDS Technical Delegate David Staley.

"The teams have enjoyed excellent racing along with the wonderful hospitality of the Club, and IFDS will take some important lessons away from this event. The officials and organisers have provided some very constructive input regarding the new three-person format and the Appendix CBS and this will help us refine the discipline so that it is ready for inclusion in the Paralympic Sailing Program", he said.

Sheen's opponent in the final series was Russell Lowry from New Zealand. When he and Sheen met during the round robins, they each had a win recorded. Lowry won the second match of the finals, but Sheen came back with wins in matched 3 and 4 to claim the Championship.

The petit final was between Luigi Bertanza (ITA) and Craig Gordon (AUS). After the first match was won easily by the Italian, the breeze disappeared and teams were sent ashore to rest. When the south-westerly had settled in the crews were back on the water and Bertanza made it two in a row with a penalty on Gordon before the start and sailing well around the course.

Final positions after 6 days of racing:

- 1 Vicki Sheen, Nick Donnini & Dennis Manning (GBR)
- 2 Russell Lowry, Tom Donaghy & Paulien Eitjes (NZL)
- 3 Luigi Bertanza, Alessandro Malapiero & Elisabetta Bardella (ITA)
- 4 Craig Gordon, Joan Andrews & Paul Borg (AUS)
- 5 Manuel Gimeno, Federico Giner & Carme Garcia (ESP)
- 6 Sharon Grennan, Lucy Hodges & Toby Davey (GBR)
- 7 Kylie Forth, Ryan Honschooten & Erin McGlew (AUS)

Full results are available at www.rpyc.com.au

It is proposed to conduct the 2012 Championship in the UK and the 2013 event in France.

ENDS

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Photo Captions:

1. Vicki Sheen (GBR) tails Russell Lowry (NZL) in the pre-start today
2. Vicki Sheen (GBR) has won the IFDS Blind Match Racing Championship in Perth
3. Russel Lowry (NZL) finished second overall
4. Luigi Bertanza (ITA) took two straight wins in the petit finals today