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'The big boys - 17th SMU-RM Western Circuit Sailing Regatta' Alan Chee

The third and final day of the 17th SMU-RM Western Circuit Sailing Regatta brought with it a drastic change in conditions compared to the previous week. Courses had to be laid and relaid as massive storms brought in unexpected, but not unwelcome, pressure. The addition of a day's racing proved to test sailors not just in the relatively light conditions, but also when the wind really blew.

The regatta's first weekend was defined by low strength wind and strong current. Boats had to decide at each point in the race if heading to hug the shore for relief from the flooding waters would help them fair better than if they chased what gusts were on the right side of the course. The most recent Saturday, however, brought with it storms, and winds up to 15 knots, that made current a smaller factor and keeping boats flat a priority high on the list.

On the IRC Course, the first races were disturbed by an incoming storm which swung the wind at least a full ninety degrees east. IRC A boats began to fly spinnakers to reach the upwind mark, and even before the IRC B boats had made it round the bottom of the course for the first time the race had to be called off.

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The wind later settled closer to its original direction and the race was restarted to give us a very close IRC A race that saw Sarab Singh's Windsikher claim line honours, but not the first position after correction of the boats' elapsed times. Afterwards, Windsikher earned a bullet in the next race with some fast sailing, while Bill Bremner's Foxy Lady VI were set back in second due to an untimely start. The last race of the day seemed to become a private battle between Winsikher and David Dimmock's Blue Note as Foxy Lady VI decided to retire with her healthy lead, and prepare for the celebrations that would surely follow that night.

The final score:

- 1) Foxy Lady VI (7pts)
- 2) Windsikher (14pts)
- 3) Blue Note (19pts)

The IRC B class started after the storm to a general recall, and even after restarting, Alexi Lim's SMUMad still found herself OCS. This gave Gordon Maxted's Shoon Fung Too and Kurt Metzger's Waka Tere a good opportunity to close up the point lead. They finished together, but after correction, Waka Tere took first, and Shoon Fung Too third, with Glen O'Grady's O'Blueyes secretly slotting herself between them. As the storm let up though, so did the wind, and in the lighter weather, Alexi Lim's SMUMad and Bryan Chan's SMUVE managed to finish first and third in the last race of the day, with Shoon Fung Too claiming second.

The final score:

- 1) SMUMad (10pts)
- 2) Waka Tere (10pts)
- 3) SMUVE (14pts)

The PY boats seemed a little unsure of their starts this week. In the first race of the day, Dieter Trau's Watermelon arrived at the pin end very early, forcing a tack back onto port to start, while Desmond Seah's Arbudhen nearly nicked the committee boat. After that, the next race saw the whole class starting at their own time, some almost nowhere to be seen when the gun went. In the end, it was Keoughan Gerald's Jen's Jaunt that bested the fleet to gain herself three bullets--a good showing that, unfortunately, could not salvage two previous days worth of heavy point baggage.

The final score:

- 1) Arbudhen (13pts)
- 2) Watermelon (13pts)
- 3) Cibeles (14pts)

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Over at the other course, the J24's continued to battle it out. Fierce starts and roundings that saw multiple penalties taken were the theme of the day. The first race had boats starting downwind, but only Sean Lee's Ms Jock dared start with a spinnaker up. It was Borstnar Vladimir's Angel, however, which crossed the line first, with the two SMU boats Victoria Koh's Shengli and Judith Chen's Quarterdeck fighting near the race committee vessel. Shengli gave it a little bump and was forced to start the race with a two-turn penalty. Surprisingly, after Angel had once again claimed her spot at the finish, it was Shengli who made it back next, followed by Ms Jock and finally Quarterdeck. The rest of the races saw similar action when misjudged current, or forced error cause Quarterdeck to slide past a mark and pick up a penalty, and in a shortened race, Shengli managed to best Angel to further tarnish her once clean sheet.

The final score:

- 1) Angel (10pts)
- 2) Shengli (20pts)
- 3) Ms Jock (26pts)

SB20 races in the new breeze were intense, but of course, most of the previous week's leaders remained above the fleet. In the end though, it was Jeremy Chase's Glasgow Kiss who came from below to take the top spot, relegating 2014 SMU SB20 International Cup winner Justin Liu's SSF8 to second place, while Xu Yuanzhen's Ideals Racing Team recovered from the previous week to sneak into the last podium position ahead of Jervis Tilly's Tara.

The final score:

- 1) Glasgow Kiss (23pts)
- 2) SSF8 (27pts)
- 3) Ideals Racing Team (28.4pts)

The catamaran class which has grown since last year saw close racing between the top two finishers Jeremy Perrier's Bad Influence and Lin Josua's Viper 16 as they scrambled for the overall win. Andras Torok's Red Rocket was a little too far behind to catch up with them but managed secure third with a three points over Tomas Aveston's Tomcat.

The final score:

- 1) Bad Influence (14pts)
- 2) Viper 16 (14pts)
- 3) Red Rocket (33pts)

And finally, with the trimarans, Barker Evaline's SZ19708A let go of two of her races, ending her total fleet domination to end clear ahead in first place. Clive Van Onselen's Dash Boot and Alan Hodges' Kaze III jostled for the other spots, ending next to each other with only a two point gap.

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The final score:

- 1) SZ19708A (9pts)
- 2) Dash Boot (21pts)
- 3) Kaze III (23pts)

On shore, the regatta ended with its usual style in the marina ballroom. The gala dinner which featured a number of performances from small local bands to SMU-affiliated arts groups like Eurythmics, included the all-important charity auction which saw sponsored designer watches, chinese paintings and brand new household appliances go at very generous amounts, all in the name of giving back! The total amount raised came up to a satisfying S\$7,583—money that our friends at Sailability Singapore will be most delighted to use to boost their programme.

Once again, the regatta co-organised by the students at SMU and Raffles Marina staff has proven to be Singapore's biggest and best, and we're excited to see it happen all again next year!