

Publication: The Nation

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The 10th anniversary Top of the Gulf Regatta started yesterday in Pattaya with 37 boats in the keelboat and multihull classes and a good 10 knots of breeze.

Following some competitive startline action, the breeze dropped out and it became a battle of wits and tactics as the crew looked for wind shifts and building pressure to gain an advantage over their competition. By Race 2, the wind was back and the fleet enjoyed the building breeze.

The 13-strong Platu class are competing for the Coronation Cup and it was Tigrina who mastered the tricky conditions placing 2,1 on the day to take an early series lead. The competition was tough with good performances from Kingdom Property, Easy Tiger IV and Pine Pacific.

Racing off the same startline, IRC 1 and IRC 2 saw some tight sailing on the water and it was Peter Ahern (AUS) and his crew on Oi! who scored two wins from two races to take an early lead. Hong Kong's Island Fling traded places with Thailand's Wan Ma Rang for second and third.

In IRC 2, on the water the racing was close. Last year's winner Foxy Lady VI struggled in Race 1, finishing fourth, but improved rapidly in Race 2 to take the win. However, the day's glory went to the all-Japanese crew on Karasu whose two second places see them top the standings at the end of day one.

Last year's winner Hi Jinks, sailed by a crew from Singapore Management University (SMU), finished the day with a 2,1 in IRC 3. Magic won the first race, slipping to third in the second to finish the day second overall.

Kirati Assakul and his crew on Sonic sailed well in the Ocean Multihull class to take yesterday's win ahead of Mojo in second and Radab Kanjanavit's Cedar Swan in third.

The dinghy classes and the Thailand Optimist National Championships and RS:One Asian Championship start today off Ocean Marina Yacht Club. All racing finishes on Monday.

A large turn out of Thai sailors is set to make the 10th anniversary Top of the Gulf Regatta one of the largest in its history. Starting yesterday at Ocean Marina Yacht Club, Jomtien, the award-winning regatta will run over four days, finishing on His Majesty the King's coronation day on Monday.

Sailors from more than 30 countries are taking part, including more than 100 Thai sailors.

For the dinghy and beach catamaran classes, Top of the Gulf Regatta is a qualifying event for the Asian Games in Seoul this year.

Veteran sailors Damrongsak 'Oan' Vongtim and Kritsada "Anh" Vongtim, legends in Thai sailing circles with eight Hobie Asian Championship titles to their name and top-10 results in two worlds, are defending their title at Top of the Gulf and also hope to secure their place on the national squad for the Asian Games.

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Favourites in the 420 division are Pirapong "Gong" Visaka and Sittisak "Earth" Pongpan who won silver at the SEA Games last year, while reigning 470 champions Nut Butmarasiri and Navee "Tump" Thamsoontorn return to defend their title on the back of their gold medal at the 2013 SEA Games.

The pairing of former Optimist world champion Noppakao "Nai" Poonpat and former Laser Radial and 470 sailor, Nichapa "Nay" Waiwai, are competing in the 29er and look hard to beat.

Racing takes place until Monday at Ocean Marina Yacht Club, Jomtien, Pattaya.

Nation News Network Co., Ltd.