

## The 2026 ILCA Thailand Nationals Winners

From January 24 to 26, Royal Varuna Yacht Club hosted the ILCA Thailand National Championship, featuring a massive turnout of 102 entries from 15 nations. Over three days of intense competition, the regatta delivered consistent conditions and high-stakes racing across all three ILCA fleets. After a calm start to the event, a reliable south-westerly breeze filled in on Day 1 at 12–14 knots, with gusts reaching 18 knots. The event crowned three new Thai champions: Chusitt Punjamala on ILCA 7, Grace Moutgomery on ILCA 6 and Hussaluk Srinakorn on ILCA 4 Pages 06 & 13



## Royal Varuna Open Masters Championship - a masterpiece



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**WHAT'S INSIDE** **From the Sails to a Sofa: The Miraculous Rescue of Hobie!** In the busy workshop area of the Varuna Club, life is usually about boat maintenance and saltwater. But recently, a tiny black kitten discovered that the club is also a place of second chances and unexpected heroes! Page 27

## Charting a New Course: Why Your Schools Should Embrace Sailing at Royal Varuna Yacht Club.

In today's fast-paced educational landscape, the most profound lessons often happen far from the desk. At the Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC) in Pattaya, students are swapping textbooks for tillers and classrooms for the open sea, discovering that sailing is one of the most effective ways to build character and life skills.

The RVYC program, "Beyond the Classroom," focuses on holistic student development. Page 25

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# A message from Varuna's General Manager, Ms Pongpun "Kai" Polyote

Dear Members and Friends,

On behalf of the Royal Varuna Yacht Club, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to each of you for your continued support and dedication. Our club is more than a place for sailing; it is a community built on friendship, respect, and a shared passion for the sea.

As we welcome the new season, I am delighted to see our members and guests enjoying the facilities, the water, and the vibrant atmosphere that makes RVYC truly unique. Your participation in our events and activities not only strengthens our traditions but also inspires us to keep improving and create memorable experiences for everyone.

Please know that our team remains committed to ensuring the highest standards of hospitality, safety, and service. Together, we will continue to uphold the proud legacy of the Royal Varuna Yacht Club while embracing new opportunities for growth and enjoyment. We remain committed to providing a welcoming environment where tradition and innovation meet, ensuring that every member feels valued and every guest experiences the warmth of our hospitality.

Thank you for being an essential part of our journey. I look forward to seeing you at the club and sharing many memorable moments together both on and off the water.

With warm regards,

Pongpun "Kai" Polyote

General Manager - Royal Varuna Yacht Club



## ALERT



# American Cup 2026

### Event Details:

- May 30, 2026,
- Venue: Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC), Pattaya, Thailand
- Eligible Classes: Optimist, Monohulls, F18, Hobie/Darts

**Experience the ultimate blend of competitive spirit and American hospitality! The American Cup is a high-energy "home away from home" event celebrating U.S. traditions in the heart of Pattaya.**

Forget the standard laps—this event features a single, epic long-distance race.

- The Start: Watch the action unfold right from the sand with a dramatic beach start.
- The Course: A gruelling test of endurance and strategy across the Gulf of Thailand.

After the race, the club hosts a legendary traditional feast featuring:

- Deep Fried Turkey: Golden, crispy, and juicy—the day's true star.
- Beef Brisket: Slow-cooked, melt-in-your-mouth perfection.
- The Classics: Heaping sides of bread, slaw, and creamy mash.

## Chit-chat with the legendary Peter Cummins, Varuna member since 1973, and still going strong!

For any sailor, sharing the water with a monarch is an honour. For Mr. Peter Cummins, it became one of the defining relationships of his life on the water. A longstanding pillar of the Varuna sailing community since 1973, Peter had the unique privilege of sailing, competing, and collaborating with His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great, a monarch renowned for his engineering mind and formidable skills as a yachtsman. In this chitchat, Peter opens his memory banks to recount the atmosphere on the royal boat, the specific lessons in seamanship he learned from the King, and the timeless wisdom shared between two sailors bound by the wind and the waves.

**Q: Thank you for sharing your time and memories. How did you first get into sailing, and what was your first boat?**

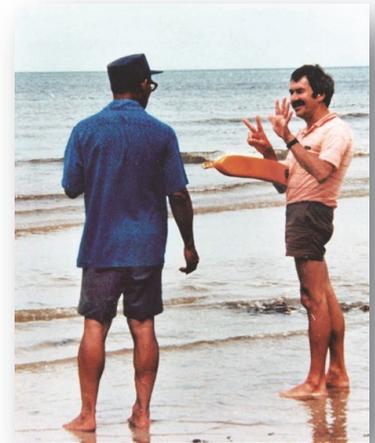
That’s a question that takes me back quite a bit! My journey into the world of wind and waves didn’t actually start in the tropical heat of Thailand, but rather in the much cooler climate of my home state, Tasmania, Australia. Growing up on an island, you’re never far from the water. I spent my youth surrounded by the rugged beauty of the Tasmanian coast, and it was there that I first developed a respect for the sea. After leaving the Australian Navy in 1968, my path eventually led me to Southeast Asia, where I settled in Thailand and joined the Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC) in 1973. My first real boat was an OK Dinghy. For those who haven’t sailed one, the OK is a 4-meter, single-handed racing dinghy. It’s a purist’s boat—no jib, just you, a single sail, and a very sensitive tiller.

**Q: When did you first join the club, and what was it like back then?**

I joined in 1973. Back then, Varuna was a much more modest affair than the world-class facility it is today. It was a collection of passionate sailors, many of us expats and locals who just wanted to get away from the bustle of Bangkok. The atmosphere was incredibly intimate; we were a family. There were no high-rises blocking the wind, just the beach, the salt air, and a shared obsession with the OK Dinghy.

**Q: What is the most challenging or memorable race you’ve ever completed?**

The most memorable races were always the long-distance crossings to Hua Hin. Navigating the Gulf of Thailand requires constant vigilance. It wasn’t just about speed; it was about



endurance and reading the weather patterns of the Gulf, which can be notoriously fickle.

**Q: One of your most fantastic memories associated with the club was the opportunity to sail with His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, The Great. Could you tell me about the very first time you sailed alongside His Majesty King? What was your initial impression?**

The first time I sailed alongside the King, I was struck by his absolute focus. My initial impression wasn’t of a monarch, but of a serious competitor. He didn’t want a "royal escort" on the water; he wanted a race. He looked at the tell-tales on his sail with the same intensity he applied to his state duties. He was a man who truly understood that the wind doesn’t care about titles.



**Q: What was the atmosphere like when sailing with the King? Was it formal or relaxed?**

On the water, it was surprisingly relaxed yet governed by a deep mutual respect. Once the starting gun fired, the "Royal" part of the title faded into the background, and he became the Skipper. He preferred it that way. He enjoyed the honesty of sailing—if you made a mistake, the boat reacted, regardless of who you were.

**Q: Do you recall any specific instances where his seamanship or technical knowledge of sailing really impressed you?**

His Majesty's technical knowledge was formidable. He didn't just sail boats; he designed and built them. I remember being

impressed by his understanding of hydrodynamics. He once discussed the "Vega" (his self-built OK Dinghy) with such technical precision—talking about the flex of the mast and the hull's displacement—that it felt like talking to a professional naval architect. He was a "hands-on" sailor in the truest sense.

**Q: Did he share any wisdom or philosophy about life that he connected to sailing?**

The King often viewed sailing as a metaphor for self-reliance. He believed that a sailor must be disciplined and capable of solving their own problems. He once shared the sentiment that sailing teaches us to work *with* nature, not against it—a philosophy of harmony and "Sufficiency" that he applied to his leadership of Thailand.



**Q: Can you share a personal anecdote—a small, memorable moment—that captured his essence?**

I recall a moment after a race where the King was tinkering with his rigging. He was completely focused, his hands covered in salt and grime, just like any other sailor. A member of the royal entourage tried to step in to help, and the King gently waved them off. He wanted to feel the tension of the lines himself. That was his essence: humility and a desire to understand the mechanics of his world firsthand.

**Q: What is the most critical lesson the sea has taught you?**

The most critical lesson the sea taught me is humility. You can be the best sailor in the world, but the ocean is always in charge. It teaches you to be prepared, stay calm under pressure, and respect the elements.

**Q: If you could give one piece of advice to a new club member or beginner sailor, what would it be?**

My advice is simple: Don't be afraid to capsize. You only truly learn the limits of your boat (and yourself) when you've gone over. Right the boat, climb back in, and keep sailing. The wind is the best teacher you'll ever have.

# The 2026 ILCA Thailand Nationals Winners

## Royal Varuna's 2026 ILCA Nationals: A Masterclass in South-Westerly Sailing

### ILCA 7 Champion: Chusitt Punjamala: The Veteran's Return

Chusitt is a mainstay of Thai sailing. Having campaigned for the Olympics (Tokyo and Paris cycles), his victory here at the Thailand Nationals is a testament to his tactical maturity. After a calm start to the event, Chusitt excelled when the breeze filled in. His ability to handle the 18-knot gusts gave him the edge over the international heavy-hitters who often use RVYC as a winter training base.

### ILCA 6 Champion: Grace Montgomery: The Rising Dynasty

Grace follows in the footsteps of her Olympian sister, Sophia Montgomery. Grace has transitioned from a top-tier youth sailor to an open-class powerhouse. Only a year or two ago, she was the "one to watch" in youth fleets. Winning the National Championship in the ILCA 6, the most tactically dense fleet, proves she is now the standard-bearer for the class in Thailand.



### ILCA 4 Champion: Hussaluk Srinakorn: The Next Generation

The ILCA 4 fleet is the "breeding ground" for future stars. Hussaluk's victory in a fleet of 100+ entries shows incredible composure for a young athlete. Winning in a mixed international field requires more than just speed; it requires clean starts and "big fleet" management, which Hussaluk clearly mastered over the three days.

## ALERT

# Royal Varuna's Toughest Competition, The 2026 Prince Bira's Firebird Trophy

**200kg of bronze and 30 nautical miles of open sea remain the ultimate test of endurance: It's Thailand's most iconic offshore race.**

**The Legacy of the Firebird:** Before he was an Olympic sailor, Prince Bira was Thailand's first Formula 1 legend. Upon retiring from the track in 1955, he brought that same "need for speed" to the Royal Varuna Yacht Club. In 1970, he founded the Firebird Trophy to challenge the nation's best sailors in the high-performance Fireball class. The trophy itself is a masterpiece of both art and endurance. A trained artist, Prince Bira hand-sculpted the trophy in 200kg of solid bronze. He famously made it so heavy to ensure it could never be easily moved or stolen. The base is a topographical map of Koh Rin, the rugged island that serves as the race's turning point. Prince Bira didn't just donate the prize; he and his consort, Princess Lom, won the inaugural race in 1970. Originally a dinghy race, the event became an "open" handicap in 1992. Today, it remains the ultimate test of offshore skill, a 30-mile journey that bridges the golden age of Thai racing with the high-tech fleets of 2026.



# Sun, Sails, & Spit-roasted Pork The Commodore Cup 2026

Love was in the sea air as the Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC) hosted the annual Commodore Cup on February 14 and 15. It wasn't just about the romantic views of the Gulf of Thailand, though; it was a weekend defined by tactical endurance, high-speed sprints, and the legendary hospitality that makes RVYC a crown jewel of the sailing community. In a rare and powerful display of the club's deep-rooted history, eight past Commodores returned to the club to stand alongside Commodore John Higham, celebrating the spirit of the Commodore Cup together.



**Saturday Long Haul:** The regatta kicked off on Saturday with a Long-Distance Race. Unlike the usual short-course sprints, this was a test of stamina and navigation. Sailors had to read the shifting coastal winds and play the currents to perfection. Whether it was the dinghies or the catamarans, the fleet stretched across the horizon, providing a stunning spectacle for those watching from the shore.

**Evening: Revelry at the Beach Bar:** After a gruelling day on the water, the fleet returned for what many consider the highlight of the weekend: the Commodore's Party. As the sun dipped below the horizon, the Beach Bar transformed into a festive hub of "après-sail" celebration. In a generous tradition, the Commodore hosted a Moo Hun barbecue for members and guests. The aroma of crackling pork and the sound of clinking glasses filled the air, proving once again that while the racing is serious, the camaraderie at Varuna is second to none.

**Sunday: The Sprint to the Finish:** If Saturday was about endurance, Sunday was about precision and speed. The race committee wasted no time, firing off three back-to-back races. The conditions demanded quick reflexes and sharp tactical turns. With three chances to climb the leaderboard, the competition was fierce until the final horn. Sailors battled for every inch of clean air, making for a thrilling conclusion to the 2026 edition of the cup.

# Smooth Waters Ahead: Key Highlights from the RVYC General Committee

As we move further into the 2026 season, the General Committee has been working diligently to ensure the Royal Varuna Yacht Club remains the premier sailing destination in Thailand. Following our recent sessions in the Spinnaker Room, here are the key highlights and strategic directions for our club.

## Enhancing the Member Experience

The committee is focused on making your time at the club safer and more enjoyable. Key facility improvements include:

- **Clubhouse & Grounds:** Approval has been granted to refresh kitchen equipment, service bowls, and cutlery. We are also continuing the installation of the bamboo wall at the beach bar and addressing necessary roof repairs.
- **Pool Safety:** A project to repair pool tiles is scheduled for the low season. In the meantime, we urge all members and school groups to exercise caution in the pool area.
- **Digital Integration:** To streamline your experience, the office is working on integrating the **Mpay** into the Varuna website for easier payments.

## Sailing & Powerboat Operations

Safety and data-driven management are at the forefront of our maritime operations:

- **Fleet Upgrades:** The assembly of the second "New Moon" RIB is underway this month. We are also testing propeller rings on our RIBs to balance safety with engine protection in local waters.
- **Regatta Success:** Recent ILCA, Master, and OK events were highly successful on the water. We are now developing new onshore protocols to ensure the social and administrative sides of our events are just as seamless.
- **Safety Transparency:** A comprehensive file regarding all club safety measures, liabilities, and waivers will be made available for members to review.

## Looking Toward the Horizon

The GC is not just managing the present; we are planning for the next decade:

- **2032 Vision:** A dedicated sub-committee has been formed to look ahead to 2032, ensuring the club's long-term sustainability and growth.
- **Dart Worlds 2029:** We have officially approved a sub-committee to begin preparations for bidding to host the Dart World Championships in 2029.
- **Community & Growth:** We are actively pursuing marketing kits for schools across Thailand to promote our RYA courses. Additionally, look forward to a Brazilian Day event this September as we expand our social calendar.

## Your Voice Matters

The committee is here to serve the membership. We have streamlined the process for member input: if you wish to raise any points or suggestions, you may now do so directly via email to the **Honorary Secretary** [secretary@varuna.org](mailto:secretary@varuna.org)

# Lloyd Sweeps the 2026 Dart Solo Nationals

The 2026 Dart Solo Nationals (Feb 28 – Mar 1) saw a dramatic shift in the leaderboard this weekend, as a combination of gruelling conditions and physical setbacks redefined the standings. While last year's victor, **William Thompson**, entered the event as the favourite, the 2026 title was claimed by **David Lloyd** in a display of pure clinical efficiency.



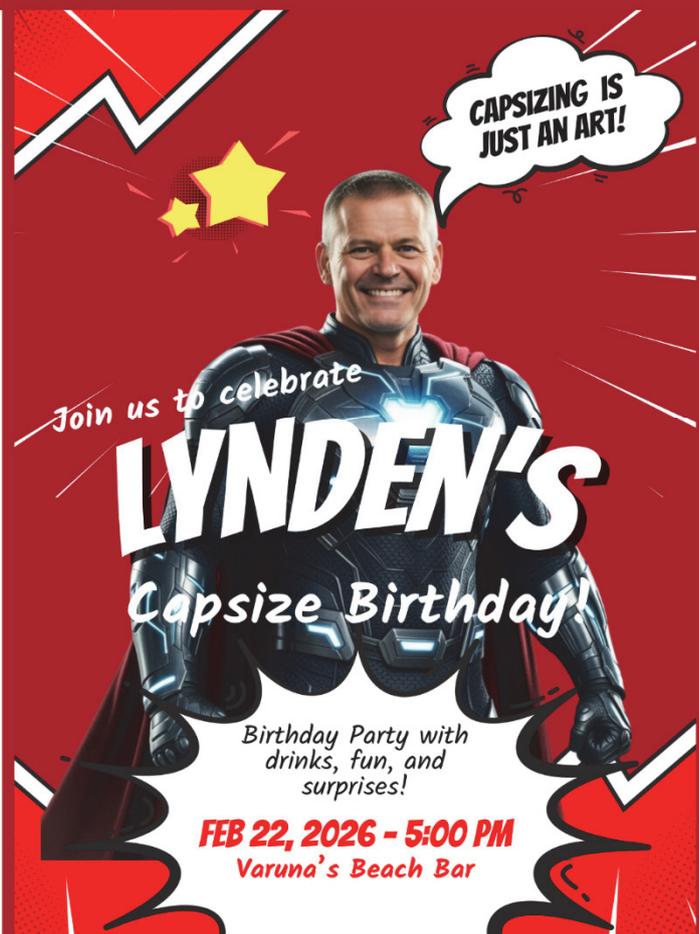
Lloyd delivered a "perfect" scorecard, securing first place in all five races, followed closely by a strong, consistent performance from **Simon Lake**. Even with the standard discard, Lloyd's net score of 4.0 points left no room for doubt about his dominance on the water. The final races saw the wind drop to very light airs, but the challenge only increased. A strong current became the primary antagonist, forcing sailors into a technical "chess match" to stay on course. These fickle conditions led to several retirements (RET) and missed starts (DNC) as the fleet struggled to navigate the heavy water. Ultimately, while the weather was unpredictable, David Lloyd's performance was anything but. He handled the heavy air and the drifting current with equal poise, marking a new chapter for the Darts Solo Nationals at Royal Varuna.

## ADVERTISING



# The Amazing Lynden's Capsize Birthday Party at Varuna's Beach Bar – February 22

*Birthday Memories!*

## ALERT

# The Wildest “Yorkshire Cup” One Big Blast & A Proper Nosh-Up!

Right then, listen up! It's time to find your sailing boots and get your game face on for the Yorkshire Cup at RVYC this April 25th. **Eligible Classes: Hobie 16 & Dart 18 / F18 / Monohulls**

### **The Plan:**

We aren't faffing about with short courses or multiple starts. This year, it's a "Straight-Line Slog." We're sending you off on one massive, long-distance race. It's going to be a proper energy-burner, so make sure you've got your "big boy" sails ready.

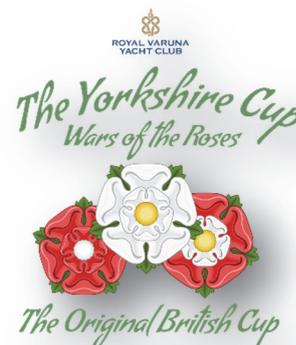
### **The Reward:**

Once you've finished "sending it" across the Gulf, there's a Free spit-roasted pork waiting at the clubhouse.

- No Pennies Required: It's a total freebie.
- The Grub: We're talking a full-on nosh-up to celebrate a hard day on the water.

### **The Vibe:**

It's basically a "Horizon Job"—get to the finish line before the others, then get stuck into the meat. **Simple as that!**



**ALERT**

# 2026 Italian Cup

## *La Dolce Vita Edition*

Get ready for a day of elegance, competition, and exquisite flavours! We are thrilled to invite you to the Italian Cup at the Royal Varuna Yacht Club on June 6. This isn't just a race; it's a celebration of the "sweet life" on and off the water.



**Event Details:**

- The Race: A challenging long-distance course designed to test your endurance and tactics.
- The Celebration: Following the race, we transition from the sea to the shore for an authentic Italian festa.

**Experience "La Dolce Vita"**

After the final siren sounds, join us for an evening dedicated to the best of Italy. Whether you're a sailor or a social member, you won't want to miss the post-race atmosphere:

- Italian Delicacies: A curated selection of traditional appetisers, pastas, and artisanal bites.
- Fine Wines: Sip on premium Italian imports as the sun sets over the Gulf of Thailand.
- Music & Atmosphere: Live vibes to keep the energy high long after the boats are docked.

**Benvenuti a tutti! We look forward to seeing you on the start line.**

**ADVERTISING**

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# "COMING SOON"

## The Coconut Boat Race

Savor the fruit, save the shell, build your vessel and win the race.



Get ready for a maritime challenge like no other! The **Coconut Regatta** invites participants to transform humble coconut shells into high-performance sailing vessels. This unique competition tests both **creativity and naval engineering**, as builders must navigate the shell's natural buoyancy while managing stability. Often requiring custom keels to keep the rounded hulls upright. Whether you are competing for the **Speedster** sprint title or the **Artisan** award for craftsmanship, success depends on mastering the delicate balance between wind resistance and weight. From hand-stitched leaf sails to bamboo rigging, these tiny "Nut-Sloops" prove that big ambitions can float in the smallest of packages.



# Sorawit Naksuk Triumphs at the RVYC 2026 Admiral's Cup



The 2026 Admiral's Cup sponsored by the Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC) concluded on February 24 after four days of intense youth sailing competition. Featuring 70 of the region's most talented young sailors in the Optimist class, the regatta, which was valid for the ranking of the World team, was supported by the Yacht Racing Association of Thailand (YRAT).

**Sorawit Naksuk (THA 1493)** emerged as the overall champion after a masterfully consistent series. Naksuk finished with a net score of 31 points over 12 races, including three first-place finishes. His ability to stay at the front of the fleet despite a challenging race 9 (his discard) proved to be the difference. The battle for second was a nail-biter between teammates. **Rachata Sadtrakulwattana (THA 1963)** secured the runner-up spot with 38 points, overcoming a mid-regatta retirement (RET) to finish strong with back-to-back second-place finishes in the final two races. **Sutinan Nakpasom (THA 1987)** rounded out the podium in third place with 52 points, finishing the regatta on a high note with a win in the final race. The top-ranked female sailor was **Surapha Maungngam (THA 1941)**, who placed 4th overall. She demonstrated exceptional skill throughout the week, highlighted by a victory in Race 5. While Thai sailors dominated the leaderboard, international talent was well represented in the top ten, with Yueyan Jin (CHN 7709) of RVYC taking 9th place overall and Krishna Venkitachalam Ramakrishnan (IND 1639) from the Royal Madras Yacht Club finishing 10th. The event featured a full schedule of 12 races, testing the fleet's endurance and tactical prowess. The "Black Flag" (BFD) and "U Flag" (UFD) played a significant role in the final days, with several top contenders picking up penalties as they pushed the start line in the hunt for points. An excellent race management and an international Jury Panel at the IODA level made this event another successful accomplishment for the Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC).



## ALERT

# The Trat Regatta 2026

### Event Details:

- 4 - 6 April 2026
- **Organiser:** The Tourism and Sports Office of Trat Province, in conjunction with Oceanfront Sailing & Watersports Club and the Yacht Racing Association of Thailand (YRAT)
- **Venue:** Oceanfront Pier, Laem Sok, Ao Yai Subdistrict, Mueang District, Trat Province, Thailand
- **Eligible Classes:** Optimist, Monohulls





# Dickinson and Montgomery Claim Overall Victory at 2026 ILCA Thailand Nationals

The 2026 ILCA Thailand National Championships concluded at the Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC) in Pattaya, featuring a massive turnout of 102 entries from 15 nations. Over three days of intense competition, the regatta delivered consistent conditions and high-stakes racing across all three ILCA fleets. *By James Young*

## Championship Highlights

- **World-Class Conditions:** After a calm start to the event, a reliable **south-westerly breeze** filled in on Day 1 at **12–14 knots**, with gusts reaching **18 knots**.
- **Regional Growth:** A significant highlight was the **growing presence of Chinese sailors**, signalling the expanding depth of ILCA sailing in the region.
- **Complete Series:** The RVYC Race Committee successfully delivered the full **nine-race schedule**, maintaining a high standard of race management throughout the event.



## Fleet Results:

### ILCA 7: Dominance from Great Britain

Finley Dickinson (GBR) delivered a masterclass in consistency, leading from the first day and finishing with an impressive **five race wins out of nine**.

**1st Place:** Finley Dickinson (GBR); **2nd Place:** Nooa Laukkanen (FIN); **3rd Place:** Chusitt Punjamala (THA)

### ILCA 6: A Local Hero Emerges

The 34-boat ILCA 6 fleet saw the most frequent lead changes, with positions trading race-by-race on the final day. **Marion Grace Montgomery (THA)** secured the overall title after a standout opening-day comeback.

**1st Place:** Marion Grace Montgomery (THA); **2nd Place:** Jung Hyewon (KOR); **3rd Place:** Ton Rattana (THA)

### ILCA 4: A Photo Finish

The ILCA 4 division provided the most dramatic conclusion of the regatta. Heading into the final race, only one point separated the leaders. After nine races, the top two Thai sailors finished **tied on 17 points overall**.

**1st Place:** Hussaluk Srinakorn (THA); **2nd Place:** Pinchanok Klaysomboon (THA); **3rd Place:** Yu Kai Chen (TPE)



Across three days of racing, the atmosphere on and off the water **reinforced Royal Varuna Yacht Club's** reputation as a world-class sailing venue, providing competitive racing conditions, efficient race management, and a welcoming environment for sailors from across the region and beyond. **The 2026 ILCA Thailand National Championships** conclude with strong international participation, close racing across all fleets, and a high standard of competition from start to finish.


  
ROYAL  
**MASTERS**  
CHAMPIONSHIP

# Sailing in Paradise: Celebrating the 2026 RVYC Masters Championship

30 January - 1 February 2026

What a spectacular three days! The inaugural **Royal Varuna Yacht Club Masters Championship** was more than just a regatta; it was a testament to why our club is considered the ultimate "winter escape" for the global sailing community. Under blazing 31°C sunshine and clear blue skies, RVYC hosted sailors from ten nations, blending local talent with international legends in a true celebration of the sport.

## The Racing: Shifting Winds & Surfing Waves

The conditions provided a bit of everything. After a light-wind Friday, Saturday brought enough breeze for full hiking and exhilarating surfing down the waves. Sunday's finale was a tactical masterclass, as competing breezes battled it out, forcing the race team to be at their sharpest to get the final races off before the 2:30 PM cutoff.



**ILCA 6:** Terry Sutchter (GBR) put on a clinical performance, winning nearly every race. He secured the title by 11 points over Max Hunt. A special mention goes to Andorra's **Carla Canturri**, who managed to break Terry's "picket fence" scoreline with a brilliant win on Saturday.

**ILCA 7:** Consistency was the name of the game. **Georgii Pimkin** claimed the overall victory by staying in the top three throughout. The fleet was incredibly tight, with Australia's **John Sweeny** and the USA's **Michael Matan** rounding out the podium.

**OK Dinghy:** Local legend **Morten Jakobsen** dominated from the start. Although six-time World Champion **Nick Craig (GBR)** found his groove on the final day with two wins to climb into 2nd, Morten's early lead was untouchable.



### A Meeting of Masters

The regatta was graced by the presence of French offshore royalty. **Bruno Peyron**, the first-ever Jules Verne Trophy holder, finished 5th in the ILCA 7 fleet. Seeing a legend of his stature battling it out in the Pattaya chop was a highlight for everyone on the water.

*"It's so refreshing to come out here—it's the warmth of everything. The perfect winter escape!"*

**Nick Craig**, OK World Champion.



### The Spirit of Varuna

Beyond the trophies, it was the camaraderie that defined the weekend. From **John Sweeny** gifting a sail to **Rohit Behl** for the price of a club pizza, to the daily "sundowners" at the beach bar, the atmosphere was electric. As Mark Jardine noted, it's hard not to fall in love with racing in paradise when the hospitality is as warm as the sea.

**Detailed Race report by Mark Jardine on [sail-world.com](http://sail-world.com)**



## ALERT

# Thailand International Sailing Championships & Vega Rudder

- 14 - 19 April 2026
- Organiser: The Yacht Racing Association of Thailand (YRAT), with support from the Navy, PTT Exploration and Production (PTTEP), and the Sports Authority of Thailand.
- Venue: Samudarakila Yachting Center, Sattahip, Chonburi
- Eligible Classes: Optimist / Monohulls / Multihulls

**Annual sailing event combining the National Championship with the historic Vega Rudder long-distance race, celebrating King Bhumibol Adulyadej's sailing legacy.**



# 2026 OK DINGHY Thailand Open Nationals - 6/8 February

## British Legend vs. Thai Stalwart: A Preview of the 2027 Worlds



The Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC) provided a rugged and tactical arena for the 2026 **OK Dinghy Thailand Open Nationals**. With the 2027 World Championships looming on the horizon at this very venue, the 13-boat fleet wasn't just racing for a national title; they were testing the waters for the world stage. The regatta opened with a punch. South-westerly winds in the mid-teens created a "survival" atmosphere that saw three retirements on the first day. *"The wind was consistent from the south-west, but the waves were the real story,"* noted **Apple Asawwatanaporn (THA)**.

For those who stayed upright, the downwind legs were a high-speed game of "catch me if you can." **Greg Florkow (THA)** described the adrenaline: *"I rode one wave, then another, then a third, and I wondered if it would continue or veer out of control."*

### The Duel: Craig vs. Jakobsen

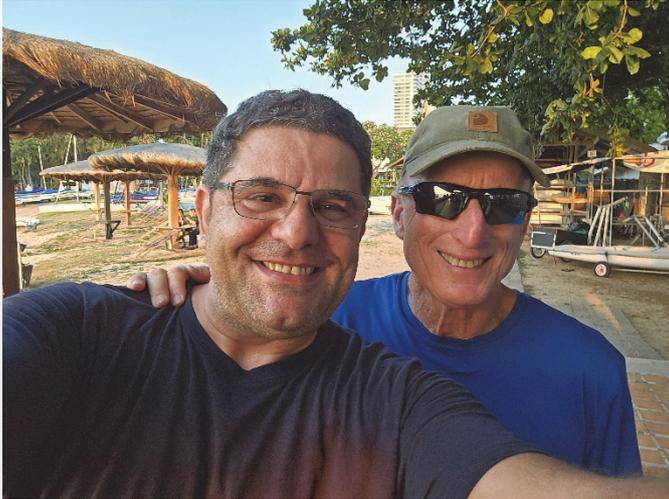
The scoreboard tells a story of two different styles of mastery. **Nick Craig (GBR)**, multi-class world champion, used a blistering middle-series performance (four consecutive "bullets" in Races 4 through 7) to build a lead. However, local veteran **Morten Jakobsen (THA)** refused to let him sail away. Jakobsen's consistency was relentless, never dropping out of the top three until the final races and ultimately winning the final race of the regatta. While Craig took the Open title, Jakobsen's performance secured him the Thai National Champion crown. This regatta confirms the OK Dinghy's "second coming" in Thailand. After decades of quiet, the class is seeing a massive ramp-up in local interest. The efficiency of the RVYC Race Committee and the world-class conditions served as a perfect operational rehearsal for February 2027. Nick Craig now heads to Brisbane for the Finn Gold Cup, but his performance in Pattaya has set the benchmark for everyone eyeing the Worlds next year.

*Detailed Race report by [Neil Semple on sail-world.com](#)*



## The Mainstay of Multihulls: Mike Montague on 50 Years Beyond the Finish Line: Living the Hobie Life

Today, we are joined by a man who doesn't just sail Hobies; he embodies the very culture they created. Mike Montague has been a cornerstone of the catamaran community for over five decades. A world-class competitor, a former Alter Cup Champion, and a 2017 Sportsperson of the Year, Mike is perhaps best known for his 'quiet' leadership—from loaning his personal boats to new sailors to ensuring that every regatta feels like a family reunion. We're here to talk about his long experience on the water and what it truly means to live the 'Hobie Way' in 2026.



**Q: Mike, you were there during the formative years of the Hobie revolution. What was it about Hobie Alter's original vision that first hooked you?**

Back when I was a teenager racing my father's Catalina Catamaran (similar to a Hobie 18 but before it was built), I wanted my own sailboat, so I tried a used Tornado Cat, hoping I would be good enough someday to sail in the Olympics. The boat was spectacular, but I really did not connect with the people who raced them, so a friend of mine recommended trying the Hobie 16. I went to one event and was hooked because of many reasons. The people were friendly and willing to share knowledge. Competitive on the water and fun to socialise on shore. Plus, it had a double trap! As it turned out, the World Championships were my Olympics, and for many years, they were held every other year in different parts of the world.

**Q: Having sailed almost every model from the early Hobie 14s to modern racing cats, what is the one design element that you feel truly defines a 'Hobie'?**

Simplicity! I am not a techy guy. Yes, there are many ways to set up a Hobie, but once you know the basics, you are good to go. Plus, at the end of every race day, there are many people to help you get better.

**Q: You've been noted for your 'class act' demeanour on the water—never yelling, never intimidating. In a high-stakes race, how do you balance the drive to win with the Hobie spirit of camaraderie?**

This has taken me many years of practice, for at one time, I took racing way too seriously. If we did not win a regatta, then I failed. Now I am past that. Yes, I really want to win, but if there is someone else sailing better than me, I'm happy for both of us. Most recently at the Alter Cup last year, with almost 90 Hobie Waves competing, my friend, Jim Sajdak, won the last 3 races and moved past me into first place. Jim deserved to win because he sailed like a champion, and I am truly happy for him! When you see me at this year's Thai Fiji Adventure, ask me about the last race of the Alter Cup. I will share a story that makes me smile.

**Q: Looking back at your championship wins, including the Alter Cup and World Championships, is there one specific race where the conditions or the competition taught you something new about yourself?**

I am learning something or refreshing what I know every time I race. If I don't, then it's not much fun for me. The crew makes a huge difference in the fun factor and the performance results. One time, about 20 years ago, I had a crew named Neuse for about 2 years. She gave me so much confidence to sail in stronger winds; the most fun she had was pitchpoling. Crazy, yes. If we were not on the edge, she was bored, believe it or not. I remember many times on San Francisco Bay when the racing was over for the day, we would stay out and push the boat as hard as we could till we pitched. I am out of that phase of my life, but it was truly fun while it lasted.

**Q: People often use the phrase 'Living the Hobie Way.' If you had to explain that philosophy to someone who has never stepped on a boat, how would you describe it??**

The people. For example, Fish. I could listen to his stories all day long. The knowledge, the places he has been, and the people he knows. It's a true privilege to call him my friend. Every time you go out sailing at the club or a new place near and far away, you will soon experience the Hobie Way of Life. It's so much more than words. I recommend sitting at a different table every time you finish sailing, even with people you really do not know. You will soon find out for yourself.

**Q: Sailing has changed immensely with new technology and foiling. What advice do you give to young sailors who are just starting out on a Hobie 16 today?**

Foiling and high-tech catamarans can be a lot of fun, but there is a price you pay for that fun. Plus, the learning to master it takes longer. It's much easier to take a couple of friends out on a Hobie 16 just to sail and goof off. On a high-tech boat, it's not recommended.

**Q: To conclude: If Hobie Alter were here today looking at the community you've helped sustain for 50 years, what do you think he would be most proud of?**

Family, the durability of the boats, and how long his vision has lasted around the world. Hobie started with the Hobie 14. Now the Hobie Wave is the hottest Hobie in the United States, with the Hobie 16 right behind it. I just love to sail them both because the Wave is a single-person boat and the 16 is a two-person boat. Each one has its advantages.

**ALERT**

# The Thai Fiji Adventure is here!

- 20 – 29 March 2026
- Venue: Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC), Pattaya, Thailand
- Eligible Classes: Hobie 16 / Dart 18



*"The boats are rigged, the Gulf is howling, and the wait is over. This isn't just a sail; it's an all-out assault on the water. Harness the wind, find your line, and push your Hobie until the rudders scream. We aren't here to play it safe—we're going hard or we're going down!"*

## Wild West Winds: When the Fremantle Doctor Met the F18 Fleet

Alex Frefel sharing his experience crewing for Florent Herson at the 2026 F18 World Championship

On the 29th of January to the 3rd of February, Florent Herson and I competed at the 2026 F18 World Championship in Jervoise Bay Sailing Club, Western Australia. The venue has long awaited the return of the F18 Worlds, and the timing couldn't have been better with the SailGP, F18 Nationals, and F18 Worlds all taking place in Perth within 3 weeks of each other. This coast is home to the famous Fremantle Doctor, a fresh sea breeze that blows all summer, which is why sailing is so good in this area. 75 teams battled it out among a fleet of incredibly skilled sailors, including sailing legends Darren Bundock and Glenn Ashby, who raced together for this event and hold an America's Cup victory and 24 World Championship titles between them. Being in the land down under, only 15 of these teams were from abroad, including our boat, which was the only Asian team once again. The ages of all competitors ranged from 14 to something like 75 years old! There are several all-female teams, mixed teams, and family teams. It was a very tough event, but especially difficult since there was only 1 fleet on the start line, making the starts crucial for a good result. The morning races were generally more difficult since the wind comes offshore from the east, creating very patchy and shifty wind conditions, although this changes once the south-westerly Fremantle Doctor arrives in the afternoon, and speed becomes the name of the game, as well as the occasional need for survival when gusts pick up towards 30 knots.



Despite the name, there were a few occasions when sailors returned with worse conditions, dislocations, or broken bones after a visit from the doctor. In the end, it was JBSC's members Brett Burvill and Max Puttman who secured the World Championship title in their very own locally built Windrush Edge boat and Next Gen sails. Matt Homan and Kris Bilston came in second place, while Darren Bundock and Glenn Ashby came in 3<sup>rd</sup> place with 13 points between the three. Florent and I had some difficulty keeping the boat upright in two races as the conditions became more hectic, and we also suffered two DNFs due to mid-race boat breakages, which dropped us to 34<sup>th</sup> place overall. Despite that, we thoroughly enjoyed the competition and proved to ourselves that we could finish 11<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> if we nail the start. It was also nice to see dolphins on the course, not see any sharks, and not hit any sea turtles, unlike some competitors. Throughout the week, JBSC did an exceptional job of hosting all the competitors and organising the event, almost entirely with the help of volunteers who assisted on the water and onshore with launching and landing. The logistics ran very smoothly, and small details such as grass parking and easy access to running water and refreshments meant there were no long queues or long faces after sailing. I would highly recommend the F18 class to sailors of all ages and to those interested in joining the next F18 World Championship. You won't regret it!

By Alex Frefel

### ALERT



*New Land Race*  
14-March, 2026

## THE NEW LAND RACE

### Event Details:

- 14 March 2026
- Venue: Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC), Pattaya, Thailand
- Eligible Classes: Hobie 16 - Dart 18 / F18 / Open Monohulls

*“Beyond the horizon of the known world, a vast and untouched frontier has finally been revealed.”*

# 2026 Hobie/Dart Thai National Championship

**British Champion David Lloyd and Hobie Legend Grahame Southwick, aka "Fish", Secure National Titles in Royal Varuna Thriller.**

The 2026 Dart & Hobie National Championship concluded at the Royal Varuna Yacht Club on March 8, 2026, delivering a weekend of tactical sailing and dominant performances. Across six races, the DART18 and HOBIE CAT fleets battled shifting conditions to determine the season's national champions.



In the DART18 fleet, the race for the title evolved into a high-stakes tactical showdown between two of the fleet's most seasoned teams. David Lloyd and Suzy, sailing boat 7711, ultimately claimed the championship with a net score of 6.0 points. Their victory was hard-earned, requiring a series of aggressive "match-race" style manoeuvres to hold off Will Thompson and his crew, Bovy. Despite Thompson's relentless pressure in the final stages, he and Bovy finished as runners-up on boat 7787 with 8.0 net points. Rounding out the podium, Simon Lake and Ja-Aey on boat 7987 secured third place with a consistent performance throughout the regatta, ending with 14.0 net points.





The HOBIE CAT fleet was defined by a masterclass performance in the Hobie 16 class by sailing legend Grahame Southwick, better known as "Fish". Alongside crew member Joshua Kurtz on boat 555, Southwick consolidated a perfect score by winning every single race in the series, finishing with a dominant 5.0 net points. The battle for the remaining podium spots was a French affair. Jean-Francois and Roch on boat 7654 took the silver with 11.0 net points, followed closely by Eric and Levy Kurtz on boat 37, who completed the top three with a net score of 13.0. The two Kurtz brothers played a crucial role in the regatta's narrative, turning the podium race into a family milestone. Congratulation!

**ADVERTISING**



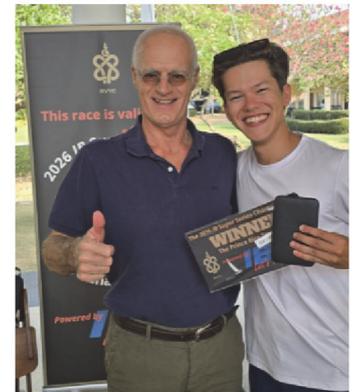
# IB Super Series Championship's latest results and standings

Gold Fleet

Silver Fleet

Bronze Fleet

Prince Bira's Firebird Trophy  
January 17, 2026



The Hobie Dart National Championship  
March 7, 2026



OVERALL STANDING

	BRONZE		SILVER		GOLD		Darts	Hobies
The German Cup	Hobie 16	Philip Yorkshire	Dart 18	Simon Lake	Dart 18	David Lloyd	3.0	3.0
The Varuna Cup	Hobie 16	J. Christopher Deledalle	Hobie 16	Antony Chapman	Dart 18	David Lloyd	1.0	5.0
The Japan Cup	Dart 18	Jon Sims	Dart 18	Simon Lake	Dart 18	David Lloyd	6.0	-
The Siamese Cat Cup	Hobie 16	Philip Yorkshire	Dart 18	Simon Lake	Dart 18	David Lloyd	3.0	3.0
The French Cup	Hobie 16	Tobias Kurtz	Dart 18	Dirk Janovsky	Dart 18	David Lloyd	3.0	3.0
The Bira Trophy	Dart 18	Cees Algra	Dart 18	Simon Lake	Dart 18	David Lloyd	6.0	-
The Commodore Cup	Dart 18	Claes Elmen	Dart 18	Simon Lake	Dart 18	David Lloyd	6.0	-
Hobie Dart National	Dart 18	Claes Elmen	Dart 18	Simon Lake	Dart 18	David Lloyd	6.0	-
The New Land Race							-	-
Drifters Dash							-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>							34.0	14.0



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**IB**

Let's Inspire ...

RVYC The 2026 IB Super Series Championship

## RVYC hosts a working lunch with Sea Rescue Pattaya City to conduct a risk analysis of upcoming events and to thank them for their continued support.



During January, the Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC) hosted **Sea Rescue Pattaya City** for a critical coordination meeting focused on safety and risk analysis for the club's busy 2026 racing season. This collaboration is vital for the upcoming major regattas, ensuring that high-speed racing and youth events are backed by professional emergency response and on-water support.

### Key Focus Areas of the Meeting

- **Risk Analysis for 2026 Events:** Reviewing safety protocols for the **ILCA Thailand National Championship** (Jan 24–26), the **Royal Varuna Open Masters** (Jan 30–Feb 1) and the **Admiral Cup** (Feb 21-24).
- **Support & Logistics:** Coordinating the placement of safety vessels and emergency medical response times for the high-density racing fields expected during 2026.
- **Recognition of Support:** RVYC formally thanked Sea Rescue Pattaya for their ongoing volunteerism and professional assistance, which remains a cornerstone of the club's ability to host international-standard events.

### Shared Commitment to Safety

RVYC, an RYA-accredited training centre, mandates strict safety measures, including VHF radio requirements and the mandatory use of buoyancy aids for all support personnel. The partnership with Sea Rescue Pattaya City adds an extra layer of professional security, especially for long-distance races and youth events like the Admiral Cup.

### Pattaya City Sea Rescue

- **Establishment:** The official **Pattaya City Sea Rescue** (often based at Bali Hai Pier or Jomtien) was formalised to handle the massive influx of tourists and the heavy traffic of ferries and speedboats to Koh Larn.
- **Role:** This unit focuses on beach safety, lifeguard services, and coordinating large-scale searches. They are easily identified by their orange-and-white patrol boats and stations along the main beachfronts.



# Charting a New Course: Why Your School Should Embrace Sailing at Royal Varuna Yacht Club

In today's fast-paced educational landscape, the most profound lessons often happen far from the desk. At the Royal Varuna Yacht Club (RVYC) in Pattaya, students are swapping textbooks for tillers and classrooms for the open sea, discovering that sailing is one of the most effective ways to build character and life skills.

## More Than Just a Sport

The RVYC program, "Beyond the Classroom," focuses on holistic student development. While students learn to navigate the winds of the Gulf of Thailand, they are simultaneously navigating the complexities of:

- **Resilience & Problem Solving:** When the wind shifts, students must adapt. Sailing teaches them to remain calm under pressure and think critically to reach their destination.
- **Teamwork & Communication:** Handling a boat requires synchronised effort. Students learn that clear communication isn't just a "soft skill"—it's essential for staying on course.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** By spending time on the water, students develop a deep-rooted respect for nature and a sense of responsibility toward marine conservation.

## Safety First: A World-Class Training Environment

For schools, safety is the primary concern. RVYC is a Certified RYA (Royal Yachting Association) Training Centre, meaning its programs meet rigorous international safety and instructional standards.

- **Expert Instruction:** Courses are led by qualified RYA professionals.
- **Annual Audits:** Equipment and safety protocols are audited yearly to ensure the highest levels of protection.
- **Heritage:** With 68 years of experience since 1958, the club has a proven track record of nurturing young sailors in a safe, inclusive environment.

## Flexible Programs Tailored to Your Curriculum

RVYC offers versatile packages designed to fit into any school calendar:

1. **Weekly Courses:** Perfect for local schools looking for structured, term-based development.
2. **Intensive Sailing Camps:** 2-to-5-day programs that combine skill-building with high-energy regatta racing.
3. **Custom Programs:** The club works directly with educators to align sailing activities with specific school curricula or leadership goals.

## A Location Like No Other

Located just two hours from Bangkok, the club offers a perfect "getaway" that is still highly accessible. With full equipment provided—including boats and life jackets—and options for on-site accommodation and meals, the logistics for schools are seamless.

If you are looking to provide your students with a challenge that builds confidence and creates lifelong memories, it's time to look toward the horizon: bring them to **Royal Varuna Yacht Club**.





# THE PIGGY SHIRT 2026 COMPETITION

## Results & Standing



### Overall Standing

Philip "Yorkshire" Capel	2
Grahame Southwick (Fish)	2
Will Thompson	2
J. Francoise "Macron"	2
Mark Hamill-Stewart	2
David Bond	1
Nat Mulford	1
Poppy Mulford	1
Chanokchon "Manow" Wangsuk	1
Florent Herson	1
J. Christopher Deledalle	1
Henry Wiedman	1
Mark Hamill-Stewart	1
Laurent Landie	1
Steefan Devos	1
Morten Jakobsen	1
Nattawut "Oat" Vongrak	1
Cees Algra	1
J. Francoise "Macron"	1
Eric "Catherine Deneuve"	1
Koravic "Wikki" Bhanubandh	1
Lynden Thomas Astill	1
Jonathan Sims	1
Roch Giacinti	1

### Piggy of the Season



## Scar "James" Montana

James didn't just quit; he went full Tony Montana at the club, shouting, "All I have in this world is my balls and my word!"

*"We will all miss you, Montana!"*



The Piggy Shirt Competition 2026

Name	Points	Category	Reason	Date
David Bond	1	Missing in Action	He's currently auditing the horizon to ensure it's level enough to sail. ETA: TBD.	01-Jan-26
Nat Mulford	1	Flying Sausages	The new rail rubber works great. The old cord? Not so much. Great Swim!	02-Jan-26
Poppy Mulford	1	Crazy Capsize	Her solo Captain career lasted exactly three seconds before the capsize!	02-Jan-26
Chanokchon "Manow" Wangsuk	1	Special Award	My brain is still in January, but my 'free trial' anxiety says was definitely February!	10-Jan-26
Florent Herson	1	Crazy Capsize	It's not a capsize; it's a tactical maneuver to wash the salt off the top of the mast.	11-Jan-26
J. Christopher Deledalle	1	Crazy Capsize	He is just performing a spontaneous inspection of the boat integrity from below.	11-Jan-26
Henry Wiedman	1	Crazy Capsize	He didn't realize his boat wasn't a submarine until he dived into the water.	11-Jan-26
Mark Hamill-Stewart	1	Trading Gelcoat	He crunched Fish's rear, ensuring that he took on 50 litres of water before the race.	11-Jan-26
Laurent Landie	1	Flying Sausages	He decided to take a swim before heading back to the club.	11-Jan-26
Steefan Devos	1	On the Rock	With a flying sausage hanging on the bridle, he manage to park the boat on the rocks	11-Jan-26
Will Thompson	1	Special Award	Even in his 50s, he still doesn't know his left from his right.	18-Jan-26
Morten Jakobsen	1	Crazy Capsize	In a world where one man dared to take the 'surf', the ultimate race for survival begins.	01-Feb-26
Nattawut "Oat" Vongrak	1	Special Award	K. Oat clearly thinks we have a lot more stamina, and vacation days, than we actually do.	11-Feb-26
Cees Algra	1	Crazy Capsize	A classic case of 'mark-down'—the boat went down right at the mark.	15-Feb-26
Philip "Yorkshire" Capel	1	Race Collision	Two boats, one buoy, and zero copies of the Racing Rules of Sailing: 'Give Way' quickly becomes 'Get in the Way!'	15-Feb-26
J. Francoise "Macron"	1	Race Collision		15-Feb-26
Eric "Catherine Deneuve"	1	Race Collision		15-Feb-26
Koravic "Wikki" Bhanubandh	1	Race Collision	She's a great captain, except for the part where she thinks the dinghy has emergency brake.	15-Feb-26
Philip "Yorkshire" Capel	1	Crazy Capsize	He tipped the boat on purpose to see if the fish wanted to race	18-Feb-26
Lynden Thomas Astill	1	Crazy Capsize	He took his birthday capsize literally and enjoy a nice swim	22-Feb-26
Jonathan Sims	1	Crazy Capsize	The race hasn't started, but I've already won the swimming competition	28-Feb-26
Grahame Southwick (Fish)	1	Rigging Expert	Check your lines!" he shouted, as his jib decided to go scuba diving	28-Feb-26
Will Thompson	1	Race Course	Still have to understand which is the start and which is the end!!	01-Mar-26
Grahame Southwick (Fish)	1	Bad Cruising	He hailed a cruise ship for fun, but becalmed, he had to call the club for a tow.	06-Mar-26
J. Francoise "Macron"	1	Race Course	Looking around and seeing nothing but white sails while you're wondering which boat you are sailing!	07-Mar-26
Roch Giacinti	1	Race Course		07-Mar-26
Mark Hamill-Stewart	1	Trading Gelcoat	He hit someone at the start once again! We believe he needs glasses!	07-Mar-26

## From the Sails to a Sofa: The Miraculous Rescue of Hobie!

In the busy workshop area of the **Varuna Club**, life is usually about boat maintenance and saltwater. But recently, a tiny black kitten discovered that the club is also a place of second chances and unexpected heroes. **A Difficult Start:** The story began when our friend **Fish** discovered a mother cat and her three kittens. Hoping to give them a fighting chance, Fish brought the feline family into the workshop, providing them with plenty of food and water. However, nature can be unpredictable. After a few days, the mother cat moved to a different part of the club, taking only two of her kittens with her. Left behind, hidden deep within a pile of sails, was one small black kitten, alone, confused, and unable to fend for himself. **The Rescue:** For a time, the kitten



remained undiscovered. Without access to food or water, he grew dangerously weak. By the time **Carlo and Fish** realised he had been left behind, the little one was on the brink of death. They acted quickly, providing him with life-saving water to stabilise him. But the kitten needed more than just a drink; he needed a family. **A New Beginning:** Luck was on the kitten's side that day. **Bernie and Saa** were there and saw the struggling animal. Without hesitation, they decided to take him home. They gave him a name that fits his sailing club origins perfectly: **Hobie**. Today, Hobie is no longer a "leftover" kitten hiding in the sails. He is healthy, well-fed, and deeply loved in his forever home. It took a village, Fish, Carlo, Bernie, and **Saa**, to ensure this little black cat had a happy ending!

## SailGP Auckland incident – Are the F50 catamarans becoming too dangerous?



The high-speed collision between the **New Zealand Black Foils** and **DS Automobiles SailGP Team France** during the ITM New Zealand Sail Grand Prix (February 14, 2026) has intensified the global debate over fleet safety. With the 2026 season featuring a record 13 F50 catamarans, the congestion on tight, harbour-based courses—combined with the massive speeds these boats reach—is under intense scrutiny by fans and experts alike. The crash occurred roughly 20 seconds into Race 3 on the first reaching leg toward Mark 1. Travelling at approximately **90 km/h (50 knots)**, the New Zealand boat appeared to suffer "rudder ventilation"—a technical failure where the rudders lose grip on the water. This caused the 2.4-ton catamaran to "skid" sideways before spinning sharply into the path of the French boat. The impact was so violent that it resulted in the total loss of both vessels for the remainder of the event.

The French boat's port hull was virtually sliced in half, while the New Zealand platform suffered a structural collapse and dismasting. The central question emerging from Auckland is whether the "racetrack" has become too small for the fleet. In Season 1, only six boats competed; in 2026, 13 boats are fighting for the same narrow lanes. *"It was shifty, wacky conditions... like Mario Kart out there,"* remarked Emirates GBR driver Dylan Fletcher, highlighting the chaotic density of the fleet. In response to safety risks, SailGP officials implemented a "split-fleet" format for the Sunday races, dividing the 11 remaining teams into two smaller groups to reduce congestion. SailGP CEO Sir Russell Coutts has since confirmed that this format will likely become the standard for future events to prevent "bottom-mark mayhem." As SailGP continues to push the boundaries of maritime technology, the Auckland incident serves as a sobering reminder that speed has outpaced space. The F50 is not necessarily "too dangerous" by design, but when 13 of them are funnelled into a harbour at 100 km/h, the margin for error disappears. The league's move toward split-fleet racing suggests an admission: to keep the "formula one of the seas" viable, the sport must prioritise the safety of its sailors over the spectacle of a crowded start line.



## 80<sup>th</sup> ROLEX Sydney Hobart Yacht Race *Min River* takes out the overall win in the 2025 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race after a protest against *BNC*, a good lesson to learn.

Double-handed *Min River* has made history by becoming the first double-handed yacht to take out the overall win in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and the first to do so with a female skipper. The win was confirmed after a successful protest against the initial frontrunner, *BNC*, over a sailing rule, with the latter suffering a time penalty as a result. The protest cited a breach of "sheeting sails" regulations in the Australian Racing Rules. The breach related to the use of a pole to secure the spinnaker sail, in combination with the manner by which the spinnaker was attached to the boat, during the boat's finishing run up the River Derwent. The breach by *BNC* occurred in the final two nautical miles of the 628-nautical-mile race. The rule states: "No sail sheet be sheeted over or through any device that exerts outward pressure on a sheet or clew of a sail at a point from which, with the boat upright, a vertical line would fall outside the hull or deck [except in some conditions]." In sailing, a sheet refers to a rope or cable used to control the movable corners, or clews, of a sail. *BNC* was given a penalty of 1 hour and 5 minutes, meaning it falls behind *Min River* in the handicap standings. ***A rule is a rule!***



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## REGION OF SARDINIA & CITY OF CAGLIARI ANNOUNCED AS FIRST HOST VENUE FOR THE INITIAL PRELIMINARY REGATTA TO TAKE PLACE IN MAY 2026

Sardinia will open the Louis Vuitton 38th America's Cup Preliminary Regatta programme of events, with the main event taking place in Naples between May and July 2027. In Cagliari, in the Conference Hall of the city's cruise terminal, the first of the Preliminary Regattas was presented. The event is promoted and funded by the Tourism Department of the Region of Sardinia and organised in collaboration with America's Cup Event, the Italian Government, particularly the Minister for Sport & Youth Andrea Abod, and Sport e Salute S.p.A. The first Preliminary Regatta will take place in the Gulf of Angels, in the waters in front of the Port of Cagliari, the home of Luna Rossa, from 21 to 24 May 2026. Five teams are currently entered, each competing with up to two one-design foiling AC40 yachts, one of which will be dedicated to crews made up of Women and Youth America's Cup sailors. During the first days, the teams will compete in a series of fleet races, after which the top two in the standings will face each other in a winner-takes-all final that will determine the overall Preliminary Regatta winner. For all the teams competing in the Louis Vuitton 38th America's Cup, the Sardinian event will be the first real opportunity to go head-to-head, assess performance and observe different racing tactics.



## Introducing new members:



Varuna is delighted to welcome our new member, **Francesco Grillo**, CEO & Co-founder of Steel Available Hong Kong. Francesco is also the **Commodore of the Hong Kong Hobie Club**. Class of 1977, Francesco is an Italian sailor with extensive experience in catamaran sailing. He regularly visits the Royal Varuna Yacht Club with family and friends, joining club activities.



## James's Farewell



*It's never easy saying goodbye to a legend like James. He was the heart of Varuna, bringing a level of creativity and positivity that we're really going to miss.*

*James, thank you for the attitude, the laughs, and for being such a fantastic teammate. We're rooting for you in your next chapter—we know you'll crush it!*

## Reciprocals:



**HONG KONG HOBIE CLUB**  
香港雙體帆船會

Welcome to the **Hong Kong Hobie Club**, a dynamic sailing club. The Hobie Club offers some of the city's most exhilarating and affordable sailing. Located on To Tei Wan beach, close to Stanley and just 30 minutes from Central, enjoy easy access to Tai Tam Bay and the spectacular open sea beyond. There's nothing like racing to assess ability, improve sailing skills, and get maximum thrills on the water.

The Hobie Club sailing calendar includes regular weekend racing, distance races such as the Shek O Dash, Lamma Challenge and Cheung Chau Challenge; and bigger events such as the Around the Island Race, LBC's Asian Open Regatta, and their very own Hong Kong Hobie Club Regatta. **Welcome to visit anytime!**

