

US Olympic Trials West



2006 US Sailing Pre-Trials

The ladies have their day as 470 and RS:X Olympic Pre-Trials open in Long Beach

Oct. 26, 2006

LONG BEACH, Calif.---Along with draw poker and American Idol, sailing is one of the few competitions where women can face off with men on equal terms.

"It's wonderful," Isabelle Kinsolving said Thursday as the first day of 470 dinghy racing in the third week of Southern California's US Sailing Olympic Pre-Trials turned into Ladies Day on the water.

Stuart McNay of Chestnut Hill, Mass. and crew Graham Biehl, San Diego, emerged as the early leaders with two first places and a second, but the women's teams of Erin Maxwell/Kinsolving, Canada's Jennifer Provan/Carol Luttmner and the Czech Republic's Lenka Smidova with Elizabeth Kratzig of Miami Beach as crew grace the next three positions after the first of four days' racing.

The genders are separated in the RS:X windsurfer classes nearer the beach east of Long Beach, with Ben Barger of Tampa, Fla., runnerup to Peter Wells in the 2004 U.S. Trials, posting two runaway victories on the new Olympic board and Nancy Rios and Farrah Hall swapping firsts and seconds to share the women's lead after two races.

Following morning Santa Ana desert winds up to 15 knots, the breeze shifted 180 degrees to onshore for the rest of the day but only flirted with double-digit velocity, raising the opinion that the light wind favored the women because they're smaller. Kinsolving, a slim six feet tall and an Olympic participant at Athens, wasn't buying any of that.

"None of the men's teams here are significantly bigger than the women," she said.

Paul Foerster, a 2004 Olympic gold medalist who is coaching some of the women this week, chimed in, "They're just better sailors!"



Canada's Provan and Luttmner lead the way in the first 470 race



Silver medalist Lenka Smidova (l.) of the Czech Republic and crew Elizabeth Kratzig are 4th overall



Nancy Rios (c.) shares women's RS:X lead with Farrah Hall

Provan and Luttmmer showed that when they won the first race by relentlessly holding off McNay/Biehl and Maxwell/Kinsolving on two laps around the trapezoid track.

"They're our tuning partners," McNay said. "They caught a nice right shift coming off the starting line and passed everyone."

Smidova also can be expected to hold her own this week. She won a silver medal for the Czech Republic at Athens and plans to sail with Kratzig, an American, as crew at Qingdao in 2008. Kratzig said nationality will not be a problem. "I have a residence there and meet all the requirements," she said.

Other sailors have switched countries from one Olympics to another---notably, Rod Davis of Coronado, Calif., who won a gold medal for the U.S. at Long Beach in 1984 and a silver for New Zealand eight years later.

Kinsolving said she welcomes the head-on rivalry instead of separate scoring because "otherwise when you work real hard to pass a boat and it turns out to be a man, it doesn't mean as much."

Barger (pronounced with a hard G, as in burger) was never challenged in his two wins. "The rest of the Americans here aren't as tuned up in the light air," he said.

The new RS:X is about a foot wider and a foot and a half shorter than the Mistral it follows in the Games, and the downside is that it's slower in light wind.

"In this wind today the old board would be faster," Barger said, "no doubt about it."

The 470s are sailing out of the US Sailing Center while the RS:Xs are based at Alamos Bay Yacht Club down the street.

Previous Pre-Trials hosted this month: Tornado, San Diego YC; 49er, Southwestern YC, San Diego; Finn, Newport Harbor YC, Newport Beach; Star, California YC, Marina del Rey. Complete results are available at www.sdyc.org/trials/ or directly through the links in the right-hand column.

A year from now the same venues will host the formal Olympic Trials to select the one boat in each class that will represent the United States in the Olympics at Qingdao, China in 2008.



Ben Barger cruised to first place in both men's RS:X races

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Current leaders

470 (men and women combined; 12 boats, after 3 of 10 races):

1. Stuart McNay, Chestnut Hill, Mass./Graham Biehl, San Diego, 2-1-1, 4 points.
2. Erin Maxwell, Norwalk, Conn./Isabelle Kinsolving, New York, 3-3-4, 10.
3. Jennifer Provan, Toronto, Can./Carol Luttmer, Kingston, Ont., 1-2-8, 11.



MEN'S RS:X (5 boats, after 2 of 10 races):

1. Ben Barger, Tampa, Fla., 1-1, 2.
2. Mark Powell, Miami, 2-2, 4.
3. Seth Besse, Guilford, Conn., 4-3, 7.

WOMEN'S RS:X (5 boats, after 2 of 10 races):

1. Tie between Nancy Rios, Cocoa, Fla., 2-1, and Farrah Hall, Annapolis, 1-2, 3.
3. Karen Marriott, Lakewood, Colo., 3-3, 6.

Complete results, photos and more information:
www.abyc.org and www.sdyc.org/trials

Entry and other information is available at
www.ussailing.org/olympics/pretrials/default.aspx

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