

# US Olympic Trials West



## 2006 US Sailing Pre-Trials

The breeze blows better for some than others in the new RS:X Olympic class

Oct. 27, 2006

LONG BEACH, Calif.---To hear the competitors tell it, nobody in the world is the right size to sail the RS:X board, the new Olympic windsurfer.

Ben Barger of Tampa, Fla. has won all five races in this final weekend of Southern California's US Sailing Olympic Pre-Trials for eight of the 11 Olympic classes, but he had a harder time doing so Friday.

"I had my work cut out for me," Barger said. "These other guys are all quicker than me in a breeze."

That would include Seth Besse of Guilford, Conn., who was second in all three of Friday's races.

"I'm a good 25 pounds heavier than him," said Besse, who scales 185. "That's a big advantage for him until the wind hits 12 knots. At 15 to 18 we're pretty close, and at 20 I'm a lot faster."

The wind picked up to 11 to 14 knots on the second day of Pre-Trials for the RS:Xs and the 470s that sailed on an outer course with perhaps a bit more breeze.

At the other end of the scale is Nancy Rios of Cocoa, Fla., all 117 pounds of her, who has now won three of four of the women's races but has worked herself hard pumping the sail---the standard style in this class, especially when the wind is light. Afterward she needed a massage from Sean Hunt, a masseuse hired by US Sailing just for the windsurfers.

Rios noted that when it's light the women have to work harder because "the boys have bigger sails and were able to plane more. I'd like to switch for one day."

"I'd like to switch [bodies] with *her*," Barger said.

He's thinking ahead to the 2008 Olympic sailing at Qingdao, China, where the wind is notoriously light.

**Ben Barger (l.), starting alongside Seth Besse (c.) and Steve Bodner, has won all five RS:X races**

**Amanda Clark and Sarah Mergenthaler moved into a tie for second in the 470s**

**Farrah Hall, second in women's RS:X, looks like she's having fun**

**Erin Maxwell and Isabelle Kinsolving (l.) set the pace downwind**

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**[Pre-Trials](#)**

Besse said, "The guys who won [in the recent test regatta] in China weren't over 130 pounds."

In the 470s, Stuart McNay of Chestnut Hill, Mass. and crew Graham Biehl of San Diego moved well away from the pack with two firsts and a second for a 10-point lead with six of 10 races completed.

But the good news for several sailors was being able to discard their worst finishes after five races. That and scores of 3-1-2 for the day jumped one of the leading female teams, Amanda Clark of Shelter Island, N.Y. and crew Sarah Mergenthaler, Harvey Cedars, N.J., into a second-place tie with Erin Maxwell and Isabelle Kinsolving in combined scoring. Clark and Mergenthaler suffered a 13-point score for jumping the start line in the second race Thursday.

"Not having that helped things," Clark said. "Today was a lot of fun. They gave us a long course that let the boats spread out."

Clark and Mergenthaler placed 11th in this year's women's 470 Worlds. "I like where we are in our campaign right now," Clark said.

Not liking where they are as much are one of America's stronger Olympic prospects, the team of Mikee Anderson and crew David Hughes of San Diego. They didn't sail Thursday because Anderson had an economics test at USC, from where he'll graduate in December. Their day was 7-3-3, leaving them ninth overall with only four races left to make a run.

"I hadn't been in a boat for seven weeks," Anderson said, "and we were really hurting mentally. I'm drained after exams."

Their worst moments were when their topping left dropped the spinnaker pole "three or four times" on one downwind leg, allowing four boats to pass them.

The background of Friday's racing was a line of yellow smoke from a massive inland desert fire that obscured the mountains and blew offshore down the San Pedro Channel, opposite from the onshore sea breeze from the southwest. The fire has claimed the lives of four firefighters and destroyed several homes

The 470s are sailing out of the US Sailing Center while the RS:Xs are based at Alamitos Bay Yacht

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[Tornado](#)  
[San Diego YC](#)  
[Oct. 13-15](#)

[49er](#)  
[Southwestern YC](#)  
[Oct. 20-22](#)  
[\(Includes photo gallery\)](#)

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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.sdy.org/trials/](http://www.sdy.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.

### **Current leaders**

470 (men and women combined; 12 boats, after 6 of 10 races; 1 throwout):

1. Stuart McNay, Chestnut Hill, Mass./Graham Biehl, San Diego, (2)-1-1-1-2-1, 6 points.
2. Tie between Amanda Clark, Shelter Island, N.Y./Sarah Mergenthaler, Harvey Cedars, N.J., 4-(13/OCS)-65-3-1-2, and Erin Maxwell, Norwalk, Conn./Isabelle Kinsolving, New York, 3-3-4-2-(5)-4, 16.

Complete results: <http://www.usclub.org/>

MEN'S RS:X (5 boats, after 5 of 10 races; 1 throwout):

1. Ben Barger, Tampa, Fla., (1)-1-1-1-1, 4.
2. Seth Besse, Guilford, Conn., (4)-3-2-2-2, 9.
3. Mark Powell, Miami, 2-2-3-(4)-3, 10.

WOMEN'S RS:X (5 boats, after 4 of 10 races):

1. Nancy Rios, Cocoa, Fla., 2-1-1-1, 5.
2. Farrah Hall, Annapolis, 1-2-2-2, 7.
3. Karen Marriott, Lakewood, Colo., 3-3-3-4, 13.

Complete results, photos and more information: [www.abyc.org](http://www.abyc.org) and [www.sdy.org/trials](http://www.sdy.org/trials)

Entry and other information is available at [www.usclub.org/olympics/pretrials/default.aspx](http://www.usclub.org/olympics/pretrials/default.aspx)

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