

Nieuwport Sailing debrief

The Venue

Nieuwport is situated on the Belgium coast close to the French border. As a result, it is extremely tidal. Any wind below 10-12 kts means no sailing for the optimist fleet. Waves can build up to major rollers. This is not a “nice” venue to sail as drifting between the races makes coaching, hydrating or eating very difficult. Furthermore, the sail out was very long inducing almost every time a tow.

On the bright side, it was a tough and challenging event where only the strongest mentally and physically could make a difference. Coach-sailor interaction had to be brief and constructive; there were no time for wasting time.

The Irish group (Euro team)

Richie, 30th

Alex, 31st

Ali, 38th and 5th girl

Jane, 43rd and 7th girl

Oli, 49th

Eoghan, 61st

Katie, 74th and 17th girl

- Results overall were not bad and the sailors faced hard going conditions. If some of us could take it, part of the group was fading to easily. It was difficult to understand so many DNF... from the Irish international team. We should be able to take such conditions!
- We made some basic mistakes (like going to the wrong mark, several tack at windward mark-aka tide). Most of the sailors were not looking outside their boat enough and were too focussed in their own immediate surrounding losing huge amount of ground as a result.
- Starting in Belgium was probably just a little harder than Ireland. Starts were getting better and if some of you are still not consistent enough or just off timing, it is just a matter of time and practice before this becomes good. Unfortunately, the Europeans is going to be a notch more!
- Being on time for the morning briefing was a issue almost every morning for some of the sailors. I did not wait and wont wait in the future for late sailors.
- Evening debrief back at the accommodation is a good concept. We need to learn how to make them more efficient as they were too long with limited constructive interaction.

Main learning points:

- importance of tide and its effects
- perseverance and taking on hard condition
- routine more or less in place to be confirmed at Euros
- Starting in a faster fleet, front row+ good acceleration= good position to start the race
- Keep the head up and outside the boat. Read, analyse and anticipate situations (aka windward mark in huge tide)

Thomas Chaix