

Semana del Atlantico 2006 : Vigo

The Event

Vigo Bay (off the Real Nautico Vigo)

192 competitors

10 nations (ESP, POR, ITA, MAS, PUR, IRL, GBR, FRA, NED, GER)

8 races in very light to medium breeze (0-15 kts), 1 discard

Shore organisation was impressive and the Irish team had a warm welcome from the organising committee which provided accommodation and taxi. They were very obliging and answered to all our needs.

On the water performance was not as high as expected and the absence of jury in the light winds led to loads of cheating behaviour on the water (sculling, excessive body movement and dodgy mark rounding), even from so called "top sailors".

Hotel Galicia was a good location as it was only 5 min walk from the club. For shopping, unfortunately it was very far from the sailing club and the hotel (a good 30 min walk!). The club restaurant was an excellent bet as we could have a good dinner for less than 10 EUR. Other restaurants were nice but more expensive. Careful, you cant have dinner before 8pm!

We chartered 3 Mcloughlin optimist. They were in excellent condition. I had to share a RIB (small 4.00 with 25HP) with the UK coach and the French coach. Total number of boats covered being 8 affecting pre-race prep but giving the sailors more autonomy in their race approach.

Results

1	GER	Julian Autenrieth	8	1	2	2	1	1	1	19
2	MAS	Rufian Tan Hong	2	2	7	1	10	3	6	3
3	FRA	Sacha Pelisson	7	4	4	1	6	7	2	17
...										
33	IRL	Cian O Regan	45	27	16	10	48	2	17	25
49	IRL	Ross Vaughan	19	35	33	17	41	12	14	43
85	IRL	Tim O Laoire	32	37	30	58	25	53	dnf	51

Wind conditions

Race 1 : North West oscillating 2-5 kts. Shifts about 10-20 degrees and very patchy wind.

Race 2 : Easterly ocillating 10 kts. Trade off between wind (more pressure on left) and current (more current on left as well)!

Race 3 : Dying Easterly 6-10 kts. Same trade off but right side hiding from current becoming a viable option.

Race 4 : Easterly becoming very light and patchy 3-6 kts. Avoiding the strong current became very important

Race 5 : Nice Easterly 15-16 kts. Play the wind shift centred right (wind bend at the top on the right side + avoiding strong current)

Race 6 : Dying easterly 6-8 kts. Becoming very patchy. Many trade off to do between breeze and current.

Race 7 : light easterly 2-5 kts very patchy. Play with the pressure away from current main factor of success.

Race 8 : southerly 8 kts dying to 3-4 kts shifty and patchy (with a cargo entering the harbour, windward of right side of course for first fleet). Side current affecting laylines and optimum route downwind. Main factor of success was to optimise these routes and maintain the boat in pressures.

Topics covered

- Placement and acceleration off the line.

The event provided a lot of general recalls allowing a fair amount of practice on starts. The Irish team practiced on all sides of the line, Ross and Cian even managing a port tack on one of the races. Improvement were obvious with several excellent getaway. Maybe being more vocal on the line to get better respect would allow more space to move and getting them perfect then! The event was very positive on that aspect!

- Placement on the course and tactical choices.

The sailing area was very difficult! It was a river estuary and the current always came from the same direction. However, its strength varied a lot throughout the day. Apart from 2 races, the Easterly wind made the current an essential factor to consider, but not the only one as the wind was varying a lot in strength (mainly) and direction (5-15 degrees shifts). It was a permanent trade off between getting out of the main current and keeping the boat in the zones of pressure. On top off that, the sailors had to deal with a strong opposition, and their placement relative to the fleet was important. Progress still have to be made as too many avoidable poor tactical choices occurred.

The strong current made the finishing line approach quite difficult. Too many tacks usually resulted in wasting ground and valuable places. Finishing line layline had to be targeted soon enough to avoid finding yourself tacking too often in the no wind cone (50-60 boats length away from line at least).

Sailing clear lanes was crucial as the wind was light. The Irish have improved on the topic.

- The “pro attitude”

Getting more autonomous and using the time available to the benefit of the racing is one of the challenge we have to sort out before the worlds. If the group seems to be fine in their boat prep and pretty efficient in getting out early trying to obtain wind, current (...) information, a couple of details have to be sorted at the next prep event:

1. Time keeping was very average. I had to permanently push the sailors to accelerate (waking up, getting changed...).
2. house keeping was very poor. The group was very un-tidy and tend to leave their litter wherever they can, except bins! This does not leave a good opinion about the Irish in general.
3. Respect for other people sometimes was poor as well. I don't think messing and making noise at 9.30 or 10 pm in the hotel was very respectful for other guests.

4. Knowing when messing has to stop! Even though representing their country with all the serious and dedication possible, it is obvious the sailors need time for themselves and should have some fun. However, they have to understand when to stop and allow time for serious talks. So far these times had to be individual and I would prefer to do them with the group together.

So, good “pro attitude” afloat but definitely a huge effort to be done ashore.

On an excellent note, the Irish sailors remained calm and well behaved (as far as I could see) in the very light air while other nations were blatantly cheating by tiller wagging and rocking the boat (even paddling!!!). This is the attitude of future top class sailors. Well done!

- Sail setting and mast rake

I worked mainly with Cian (as he is using the J sail) on sail setting and mast rake tryout session. Elements of comparison were taken from Sacha Pelisson (3rd overall and particularly fast with the J sail). Findings were that the sail works well with a loose luff, the mast raked further forward than usual and loose kiker.

Sacha's works with 283-284 in the breeze and 286 in lighter wind. Cian tried all setting from 282 to 288 and retained an average 285 to work around.

Ross and Tim had more certitudes about their own settings. However Tim was not totally satisfied by his abilities upwind (good speed but no pointing), so it will have to be investigated at the next session (Maubuisson).

More work will be done in Maubuisson in partnership with Sacha.

Overall, the event was very positive as a build up to Uruguay with loads covered giving I a fair idea on where to improve! Summary being :

Cian: good work done on boat setting and improved his getaway off the start line. Good speed overall allowing him to gain places regularly.

To be improved:

- be more “pro” and less “kid”. It should help him to concentrate more and avoid some obvious mistakes. (like missing the start???)
- The first beat tactics. When in the leading group Cian keeps overtaking, so it is just a matter a securing a top mark in the low teens or in the top 10.
- Time keeping and ability to re-focus when ashore.

Ross : Excellent starts and good concentration on the water. Races in light wind very encouraging. Keeping his temper right on the water (which was identified as a weakness with Kate Kirby) which was difficult when surrounded by cheats...

To be improved:

- The first beat tactics to race at the front in clear air. Cash in the bank from good starts!
- Finish line approach. Avoid the inside of the no wind cone in light air by finishing the last 50-60 boat length on a side!

Timmy: Starts were fairly good (but could be better still) and speed overall was fine. Maybe some more work on boat setting to try to improve pointing in light stuff.

To be Improved:

- Definitely first beat choices as Tim very often wasted a good start by “rushing” towards a side (often the wrong one, unlucky!)
- Need to keep his head more out of the boat in general

Overall, starting and first beat choices (sounds familiar...Schull main themes!!!) very crucial to be able to race with the leaders. The 3 sailors are perfectly capable of racing at the front of the fleet when there in the first place.

Starting was becoming consistently good for all. However, the first beat tactics remains the main black point.

Pre-plan for Maubuisson.

Day 1 : Training. Boat setting and sail shaping (the tape technique with video!). some boat handling with video.

Day 2 : Training. Hopefully with the French world team but in any case with the other Irish and the Brittany squad which should bring a good opposition. Themes will be placement, cover, breaking cover...

Day 3 to day 6 : Racing. Confirm starting abilities and major focus on the first beat choices.

On day 1 evening, we will try to do a workshop (will try to convince to do it with French world team) on first beat situation and discuss way of dealing with them.

As usual the analysis form will be looked at each evening.

Thomas Chaix
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