

MALAYSIA

Raja Muda round up

A record 66 boats lined up at the start line in Port Klang for the first race of the 1991 Raja Muda Series. With only two managing to complete this 70-mile blue water classic, it was a somewhat inauspicious start to what proved to be a very successful series.

The Raja Muda International Regatta, now in its second year, is hosted by the Royal Selangor Yacht Club (RSYC). With the social functions outnumbering the races, most of the competitors' complaints were from lack of sleep rather than lack of wind.

The addition of 20 boats from the Europa 91-92 Round the World Rally helped swell numbers and made for an interesting cross section of participants. Many of these boats will be heading on to the King's Cup prior to the next leg of their race (Phuket to Sri Lanka).

This year's format differed slightly from last year's with the inclusion of triangle races in Penang and Lankawi. However, in deference to the more cruising-oriented boats, these did not count towards the overall standings for the series.

With only the two passage races counting, the race committee was caught with its pants down when only *Gilmar Express*, a Santa Cruz 53, and *Wet Xpress II*, a new X-412, managed to complete Race 1.

The majority of the fleet resorted to the "iron topsail" early on in the race as strong tides and fickle breezes along the shoreline slowed progress to a crawl (or was it backstroke?).

Both *Gilmar Express* and *Wet Xpress* worked the shifts close in to the shore in the early stages of the race and managed to stretch out a healthy lead on the pack. This turned into an even bigger lead as a series of line squalls pushed the fleet towards White Rock, eight miles from the finish.

At dawn, the breeze started to die and the two lead boats were left side by side with 12 miles still to go. *Gilmar Express* opted to climb north towards a new breeze line, a move that paid off as she set her spinnaker and reached across the bow of *Wet Xpress* to round White Rock with a one hour lead. The X-412 managed to whittle that back to 40 minutes at the finish, which gave the X-Yacht an easy win on corrected time.

Meanwhile, back at White Rock the breeze had given up the ghost and with a foul tide running it was another six hours before the next boat *Australian Maid* approached the finish. Some choice Australian was heard over the radio when it was learnt they had missed the time limit by 30 seconds.

After a brief rest in Pankor the fleet made its way to Penang and the new Penang Yacht Club. Swan Marine had laid on moorings and hosted another party for the thirsty crews.

Several of the Europa 92 boats and a number of heavier displacement cruising boats decided that a run ashore was preferable to battling with the fickle Malaysian winds so a reduced fleet of 40 boats got to the start line on Saturday for the first of two triangle races. *Wet Xpress*, in light and shifty conditions, won by six minutes from the Swan 53 *Who Dares Wins*.



The crew of *Wet Xpress* in a partying mood

After another party, the fleet assembled at the entrance to Penang harbour on Sunday afternoon for the start of Race 3 – a 65-miler from Penang to Lankawi. For once the conditions were perfect with a steady 20-knot east/northeasterly giving the fleet an exhilarating white sail reach all the way to Lankawi.

Despite having to do a 720-degree penalty for a starting infringement, *Wet Xpress* held out to win the race by around eight minutes from line honours winner *Australian Maid*. Malaysian Navy entry *Marikh* (a Contessa 32) scored a very creditable 3rd in a race which should in theory have suited the ULDBs. The X-99 *Rama Rama* from Brunei ran in 4th after losing a

spinnaker in the early stages of the race.

With wins in both passage races *Wet Xpress* had effectively tied up the series but there were plenty of boats out for blood in the final triangle race.

With the intense partying finally taking its toll, a reduced fleet of around 30 boats made it to the start of Race 4 on the last day, 19th of November.

In a 20-knot northeasterly, *Who Dares Wins* made an aggressive start at the

pin end of the line and stretched out an unassailable lead over the fleet. *Australian Maid* crossed the line 2nd but again it was *Wet Xpress* that took the race on corrected from *Who Dares Wins* and *Rama Rama*.

Feedback from the regatta was very positive. If there were to be any changes next year, most competitors would like to see a four- or even five-race series with the opportunity for one discard. A race from Pankor to Penang in place of the Penang triangle seems to be favoured.

Some of the racing instructions and race supervision need tightening up but when it is remembered that the Raja Muda is only in its second year, its future seems very bright indeed.