

Ainslie shines in quest for King Edward VII Gold Cup

by Talbot Wilson

Hamilton, Bermuda (October 9, 2009): Ben Ainslie (GBR) is still undefeated as Argo Group Gold Cup quarterfinal racing got underway Friday afternoon with just two flights being completed. Current World Match Race Tour leader Torvar Mirsky (AUS) must win three matches in a row tomorrow to keep his team on the top of the Tour leader board.

Ainslie was behind Mirsky once today in their first race, but put a penalty on him at the second windward mark and went on to win that flight. "The conditions were tough," Ainslie said. "In the light shifty winds we just had to keep the boat moving."

Ian Williams was behind Johnie Berntsson in both races, but managed to come back and win both. "We were on the wrong side of the course several times," Williams said, "but managed to minimize the losses. When we got the correct side we had stayed close enough to pass."

After two flights in the quarters today, Eric Monnin leads Blythe Walker in Match 1 by 2-0, Ben Ainslie leads Torvar Mirsky 2-0, Ian Williams leads Johnie Berntsson by 2-0 and Adam Minoprio leads Mathieu Richard 2-0 as well. It is do or die for all the trailing skippers who face a 'knockout' when their opponent scores three wins.

There was a pause Friday afternoon in match racing for the Argo Group Gold Cup Pro-Am fleet racing regatta. Following those three races the completion of the quarterfinal stage of the World Match Racing Tour event will be delayed and scheduled for Saturday morning. Principal Race Officer David Campbell-Jones said the wind was just too light and shifty to have fair racing so late in the day.

Overall winner of the Argo Group Gold Cup Pro-Am regatta was Argo Group CEO Mark Watson and Ian Williams sailing with the Argo Group Team of Diana Mitchell and Ryan Brown. Earlier this summer Watson represented the Royal Bermuda YC at the New York Yacht Club Invitational Cup regatta in Newport, Rhode Island.

Looking back to Friday morning, Repechage Flights 3, 4 and 5 were sailed first to decide the final two of the eight teams that moved up the ladder toward the \$50,000 first place prize or even a share of the \$100,000 total purse.

Torvar Mirsky (AUS) Mirsky Racing Team came through that round robin with a perfect 5-0 score. For that he faced unbeaten Ben Ainslie in quarterfinal Match 2. Mirsky is the top ranked skipper on the world Match Racing Tour. Course conditions saw an early light and shifty northerly breeze fill in nicely as the morning racing moved into the second flight of the day. Mirsky was in top form then. He now needs to open his trick bag to win three in a row tomorrow to move past Ainslie.

Bermudian Blythe Walker and his Max Re team pulled a stunning gybe at the finish of his final repechage match against the young kiwi Phil Robertson. Walker won by just a meter and went 3-2. He faces Eric Monnin (SUI) Search.ch who was first in Group 1 in the first quarterfinal Match. Monnin now has two quarterfinal points on the board, so Walker also needs three consecutive wins tomorrow to stay on the water.

Quarterfinal Match 3 features two Gold Cup champions Johnie Berntsson (SWE) Berntsson Sailing Team and Ian Williams (GBR) Team Pindar sponsored by Argo Group. Williams is the reigning champion of the World Match Racing Tour and Berntsson is the reigning Gold Cup champ. Williams jumped out to a clean 2-0 lead to put the defending champion's back to the wall.

Match 4 of the quarterfinals pits Emirates Team New Zealand/BlackMatch Racing skipper Adam Minoprio (NZL) against 2007 King Edward VII Gold Cup winner Mathieu Richard (FRA) representing the French Match Racing Team. Minoprio is the top skipper in the ISAF rankings. Richard finds himself down 0-2 and like the other 0-2 skippers, he must do some fancy sailing to stay alive.

The quarter final round consists of head to head match race sailing with the first skipper winning three points in the match knocking out the other and moving into the semifinals. It's filet or feathers from this point on in the Argo group Gold Cup.

For updates all day, results and photos go to <http://www.argogrouppgoldcup.com>. Daily news highlights are available on www.sail.tv RaceTrax GPS tracking of all the action is available on line. To download the race viewer go to <http://www.race-trax.com/downloads/race-trax-race-viewer>

Quarter final standings

QF1 Eric Monnin 2 - Blythe Walker 0

QF2 Ben Ainslie 2 - Torvar Mirsky 0

QF3 Ian Williams 2 - Johnie Berntsson 0

QF4 Adam Minoprio 2 - Mathieu Richard 0

Results from Day 4

Group 4- Repechage

Torvar Mirsky (AUS) Mirsky Racing Team 5-0

Blythe Walker (BER) 3-2

Damien lehl (FRA) French Match Racing Team 2-3

Bjorn Hansen (SWE) Alandia Sailing Team 2-3

Dave Perry (USA) 1-4

Phil Robertson (NZL) WAKA Racing Team 1-4

Results from Day 3

GROUP 1

Eric Monnin (SUI) Search.ch 6-1

Ian Williams (GBR) Team Pindar sponsored by Argo Group 6-1

Damien lehl (FRA) French Match Racing Team 4-3

Torvar Mirsky (AUS) Mirsky Racing Team 4-3

Reuben Corbett (NZL) 3-4

Keith Swinton (AUS) Black Swan Racing 2-5

Ian Evans (USA) 1-6

Robbie Allam (GBR) 1-6

GROUP 2

Ben Ainslie (GBR) Team Origin 7-0

Adam Minoprio (NZL) Emirates Team New Zealand/BlackMatch Racing 4-3

Dave Perry (USA) 4-3

Bjorn Hansen (SWE) Alandia Sailing Team 4-3

Sebastien Col (FRA) French Match Racing Team/K Challenge 4-3

Rasmus Viltoft (DEN) 3-4

Alvaro Marinho (POR) Seth Sailing Team 2-5

Paula Lewin Crews (BDA) 0-7

GROUP 3

Johnie Berntsson (SWE) Berntsson Sailing Team 6-1

Mathieu Richard (FRA) French Match Racing Team 6-1

Blythe Walker (BDA) 4-3

Phil Robertson (NZL) WAKA Racing Team 4-3

Mattias Rahm (SWE) Stena Bulk Sailing Team 3-4

Peter Gilmour (AUS) YANMAR Racing 3-4

Charlie Enright (USA) 1-6

Donald Wilson (USA) 1-6

Tour Standings

(After 7 of 9 events)

1. Torvar Mirsky (AUS) Mirsky Racing Team 88 Points
2. Adam Minoprio (NZL) ETNZ/BlackMatch Racing 86 Points
3. Mathieu Richard (FRA), French Match Racing Team 72 Points
4. Peter Gilmour (AUS) YANMAR Racing 71 Points
5. Ian Williams (GBR) Team Pindar 70 Points
6. Damien Iehl (FRA) French Match Racing Team 48 Points
7. Sebastien Col, (FRA) French Match Racing Team 41 Points
8. Ben Ainslie, (GBR) Team Origin 40 Points.

Bermuda Marine Forecast

Issued at 5:30 am - Friday, October 09, 2009

Marine Synopsis - High pressure is building in from the west, allowing for fair weather over the next few days. Northerly winds will gradually ease, becoming light by this afternoon, but seas will remain rough until tonight. Unsettled conditions are likely to develop next week.

Today - Winds northerly 10 to 15 knots, gradually easing 5 to 10 knots... Seas inside the reef 1 to 3 ft... Outside the reef 7 to 11 ft, decreasing... Sunrise: 7:18 am.

Tonight - Winds northerly 5 to 10 knots, becoming variable later... Seas inside the reef 1 to 3 ft... Outside the reef 6 to 9 ft, decreasing... Sunset: 6:54 pm.

Saturday - Winds westerly 5 to 10 knots, variable at times, increasing west-southwesterly 10 to 15 knots... Seas inside the reef 1 to 2 ft... Outside the reef 5 to 8 ft, decreasing... Sunrise: 7:19 am; Sunset: 6:52 pm.

Sunday - Winds westerly 10 to 15 knots, veering west-northwesterly overnight... Isolated showers developing overnight with fair visibility... Seas inside the reef 1 to 2 ft... Outside the reef 4 to 7 ft... Sunrise: 7:19 am; Sunset: 6:51 pm.

About the Argo Group Gold Cup: bermudagoldcup.com

Stage 8 of the World Match Racing Tour

The Argo Group Gold Cup, sailed for the King Edward VII Gold Cup Trophy, is now stage 8 of the World Match Racing Tour, the International Sailing Federation match racing world championship. The Bermuda classic is the oldest match racing competition in the world for one-design yachts. The trophy presented to the winning team was originally given at the Tri-Centenary Regatta at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1907 by King Edward VII in commemoration of the 300th Anniversary of the first permanent settlement in America. C. Sherman Hoyt, a renowned American sailor, won the regatta and was presented with this now historic cup.

Through the years Bermuda has won the Cup twenty-one times, the United States seventeen times, New Zealand ten times, Australia five times, the United Kingdom three times, Sweden once and in 2002 Denmark claimed the King Edward VII Gold Cup for the first time. The 2006 winner was Ian Williams (UK) who defeated a fleet including the 2005 winner, Luna Rosa Skipper James Spithill, who in that year had shut out Russell Coutts's incredible string of wins. Mathieu Richard of France became the third consecutive first-time winner of the King Edward VII Gold Cup in 2007. In 2008 the cup went to Sweden's Johnie Berntsson and his Berntsson Racing Team in the final 3-1 victory over Adam Minoprio's Emirates Team New Zealand/BlackMatch Team.

The Argo Group Gold Cup is the ninth out of ten events on the 2009 World Match Racing Tour's World Championship schedule. It is sailed in Hamilton Harbour adjacent to the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club. The venue brings world-class match racing close to shore where spectators can easily see the competition.

The twenty-four invited crews include eight official "World Tour Card" teams and two winners of qualifying events, the Knickerbocker Cup and the Bermuda National Match Race Championship. Teams will be divided into three groups of eight to sail a round robin elimination series Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The leading eight skippers go on to the Quarter and Semi Finals, to be sailed on Friday and Saturday respectively.

The finals take place on Sunday with the top two teams in a "first to three points" head to head battle and the losing semi finalists in a "first to two points" Petite Final. Between the second and third races, the course is taken over for the final race of the Renaissance Re Junior Gold Cup, which will have been underway simultaneously since Thursday in the Great Sound.

The King Edward VII Gold Cup was a founding member of the World Match Racing Tour. The tour is a series of international events. It has extensive television coverage and worldwide promotion. The one-hour television broadcast of the 2008 event appeared in November on Eurosport, ESPN, Versus Network, the Sky network and other regional broadcasters. This network reaches more than 300 million homes in 90 countries. An exciting summary video of all the tour events can be viewed at <http://www.worldmatchracingtour.com/>.

About Argo Group: www.argolimited.com/index.aspx

Global. Powerful. Committed.

Argo Group International Holdings, Ltd. (NasdaqGS: AGII), is an international underwriter of specialty insurance and reinsurance products in the property and casualty market. The company offers a full line of high-quality products and services designed to meet the unique coverage and claims handling needs of businesses in four arenas: Excess and Surplus Lines, Commercial Specialty, International Specialty and Reinsurance.

Argo Group clients and shareholders alike benefit from the commitment to specialization, deep expertise and dynamic relationships, that create a winning combination for mutual success.

Argo Group has built a company with a fundamental purpose of securing the future and a straightforward vision to achieve outstanding results realized together.

The company and all of its operating units believe that tangible excitement is created by having desire to excel. Maintaining unwavering interest in the clients it serves forges long-lasting connections. Argo Group's trademark is a combination of intellectual curiosity and creative zeal, which brings bold, far-reaching ideas to their clients to evolve those clients' own thriving businesses.

Organization-wide, the strategy—easy to define and rewarding to deploy—is to grow hand-in-hand with their clients.

About Bermuda: www.bermudatourism.com

Although Bermuda is an Atlantic island paradise in its own right, many people mistakenly believe Bermuda is part of the Caribbean. In fact, the island rests hundreds of miles north of the Bahamas, a mere 650 miles east of North Carolina. Flights from New York and other eastern US cities are less than two hours. From London, direct flights are about seven hours.

All of Bermuda fits in a cozy 20.7 square miles surrounded by 75 miles of dramatic coastline. Bermuda is famous for hospitality and sparkling pink-sand beaches. Activities include racquet sports, dramatic golfing, spectacular spas, and cultural festivals in all seasons. Of course Bermuda is famous for sailing as a destination for ocean races from Marion, Newport, and Charleston, for Cruising rallies for other East Coast ports and as host to many national and international competitive events.

From chic international cuisine in posh dining rooms to conch stew and local Rockfish at a roadside café, we have a taste to please every palate and budget. While Bermudians do value island tranquility, we like to have a bit of fun, too. From swanky clubs to friendly neighborhood pubs, these after-hours establishments satisfy every thirst. Cocktail in hand and warm sea breeze at your back, set sail on one of our evening cruises along our famous coastline.

For details on all the excitement and events Bermuda has to offer, call your travel agent or visit us at www.bermudatourism.com

About The Royal Bermuda Yacht Club: www.rbyc.bm

The Royal Bermuda Yacht Club is a private Club and is the third oldest club holding a Royal Warrant outside the British Isles. The Royal Bermuda Yacht Club was established on the 1st of November 1844 by a party of thirty gentlemen, consisting largely of officers in the British Army. There are now approximately 850 resident and non-resident members.

About the World Match Racing Tour: www.worldmatchracingtour.com

- The World Match Racing Tour is the leading professional sailing series featuring nine World Championship events across the globe.
- The World Tour is sanctioned by the International Sailing Federation (ISAF) with "Special Event" status.
- The World Tour awards over US\$1million in prize money.
- Points are awarded at each event culminating in the crowning of the season ending "ISAF Match Racing World Champion";
- Events utilize the same "match race" format used in the America's Cup with racing taking place in identically supplied racing yachts which places a focus on teamwork and skill.
- Racing takes place close to the shore for the general public to follow the races as virtual on-the-water stadiums.
- Media and television highlights coverage reaches over 500 million households in excess of 90 countries around the world.
- World Match Racing Tour sponsors include Line 7, Pindar, Custom House, Travel Places, Wedgwood and Sail.TV.

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