

# JOHN'S JAPANESE JAUNT

Words and pictures by John Labbett

**E**NOSHIMA Olympic Yacht Harbour, Fujisawa, Japan, were hosts for the Marina Del Rey Pacific and World Championships held from 11–24 October. Enoshima is a small island in a large bay some 35 miles south west of central Tokyo. Racing was held in open seas about two to three miles south of the island, mainly in prevailing offshore winds and with negligible current. The courses were Olympic triangle-sausage-triangle-beat, with approximately two mile first beats and broad 55 degree reaches. The dinghy park was, in fact, part of the yachting complex built for the 1964 Olympics and provided more than adequate facilities with launching off concrete hards into a sheltered marina. A total of 55 competitors attended, representing 13 countries of which the Australians and the host Japanese

were the largest fleets. The regatta was also privileged to have Paul Elvstrom (now 57 years old) competing and the veteran Frenchman, Marcel Buffet, who is now 63 years old.

Two races per day were scheduled for the Pacific Championship which was held in different conditions. These varied from F2/3 in the first day to F4/5 with big lumpy seas for the second day. The third day was cancelled due to high winds and extreme seas and also to a marked reluctance on the part of competitors to risk their boats and equipment just three days before the World Championship. Racing was very close at the front of the fleet, with Gary Bruniges/Greg Gardiner eventually beating Peter Hewson/Alyn Ovenden by just one place in the final race over the series. Going into

the fourth race they has 1,2,6 and 1,4,4 respectively and although Hewson managed to beat Bruniges by one place it was not enough. Bruniges became Pacific Champion with 11.0 points with Hewson runner-up and Dean Blatchford/Tom Woods (1984 World Champions) third. Chris Lewis/Andy Grey showed good speed upwind when it was blowing and finished 4th overall, with Peter Colclough/Harold Barnes 5th. There were two Australians in the top 10 positions and an indicator for the Worlds was beginning to emerge.

There was a gap in racing for three days for measuring, recovering from the Pacific party organised by the Club on Sunday night, rubber-necking (i.e. sight seeing), boat tuning and relaxing. The World Cham-

pionship began on Thursday 17 October.

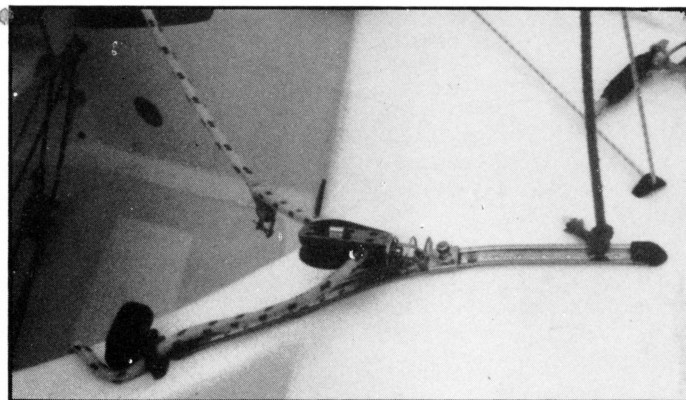
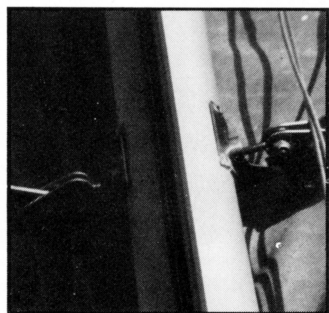
Race 1: Held in F5/7 and very gusty. Ebbe Rosen was first at the windward mark with Chris Lewis second but Rosen's kicking strap broke when he was clear in the lead. Two Australians (Blatchford and Bruniges) swept into the lead on the run by not gybing onto the lay line immediately and trapezing into the leeward mark coming up from very low. The finishing order was Blatchford, Bruniges and Jim Wondolleck (USA). There were many capsizes in a blustery day which resulted in only just over half the fleet finishing.

Race 2: Held in very shifting F3/5 with big holes in the wind. J. B. Braun (USA) was first at the windward mark with Hewson second. Braun lost the lead downwind but recovered it on the second heat and held on



**Opposite page:** Left, World Champions Greg Gardiner and Gary Bruniges. Right, the old men of the sea, King One Paul Elvstrom and Marcel Buffet. **This page:** Above, the Hong Kong team with John Labbett third from the left. Top right: Standard Kyrwood jib sheet system in comparison with, below, the system on 1984 World Champion Dean Blatchford's boat. Right: Screw spreader adjusters on an Australian Goldspar

mast. This system applies power to adjustment in both directions.



on the run. On the third beat, Blatchford and Bruniges got past and, after much tacking up the last beat, it was so close at the finish that neither was sure of the results. These were finalised at Blatchford 1st, Bruniges 2nd and Wondolleck 3rd.

Race 3: Light F2/3 and even more shifty. First round the windward mark, jointly, were Blatchford and the Great Dane, Paul Elvstrom. Blatchford proceeded to establish a clear lead while Elvstrom faded. On the last beat, while Blatchford was staying close to Bruniges, who had pulled up to second, Jim Wondolleck managed to snatch the lead on a shift. The finishing order was Wondolleck, Bruniges and Blatchford.

It was interesting to note at the half way stage that notwithstanding the variety of conditions, the same boats had finished in the top three in every race so far.

Race 4. Force 3/4. A large header for the pathfinder during the opening of the gate meant starting late paid off handsomely. Hewson (the rabbit) was first round with Ms. Aiko Saito (Japan) second and Eric Lockyear (Hong Kong) third. Hewson built up a huge lead during the next round but this was worn away by immaculate and fast sailing by other Australians. On the last triangle, Hewson was overtaken by Terry Kyrwood who

went on to win and also by the ever-present Bruniges who finished second – for a change.

Race 5: Force 1/3 with many shifts. A large starboard lift as the gate opened enabled Elvstrom, who was again first out of the gate, to be first at the windward mark with Bruniges second and Colclough third. Colclough was first at the end of the reaches, but Bruniges passed him on the second beat and held this on the run. Colclough re-established the lead on the third beat but Bruniges got past again on the last reach on the kite drop. Colclough got in front again and after a close tacking and covering duel, held on to win his first race. Elvstrom ended up third.

Bruniges' incredibly consistent sailing in a wide variety of sometimes extremely difficult and frustrating conditions gave him the World Championship title. He had managed 5 second places and had won the regatta with a day to spare. At this stage, Blatchford had a good points lead for second place overall with only Wondolleck as an outside threat, but there were about 6 boats who could make third overall.

Race 6: Light F1/2 getting up at the end to Force 3. Herve Wattine (France) was first at the windward mark with Mrs. Keiko Nogami (Japan) round second. Colclough was about 7th at the windward mark and

sailed into the lead on the first tight reach. The second beat was very close with Nogami round first, but Colclough got past on the run and held on to finish first. Nogami was second and Saito third.

Although Blatchford did not finish well, he confirmed second place overall while Colclough moved up to third after winning the last two races.

I think all the competitors agreed that this was a well organised and fair regatta which managed to hold all races to schedule. It was also held over a wide range of wind and sea conditions viz. Force 1/7 and flat to very lumpy seas – which meant it did not bias the results towards the 'one condition' expert.

What was clear was that the Australians were dominating – five boats in the top eight positions – though it has to be said they sent the strongest team from the outset. Their whole approach to fast 505 sailing is very different from British or American methodology. In essence, they all use balsa-built Kyrwood hulls with spinnaker chutes and back-tacked jibs. They have very simple internal lay-outs with few 'strings', no shroud adjustments, no struts, light and flexible (mainly) Goldspar 1.7mm masts set with full luff round (mainly) Horizon/One Design sails, jib barber haulers which move out board and up following the for-

ward thwart and no gybing centreboards. The main rig adjustment is the forestay led back to the helmsman – it is now no longer necessary for the crew to dive under the fore-deck to alter the rig!

In light wind conditions they have medium rig tension and as the wind increases they simply let off the forestay progressively and move the barber haulers outboard. This results in excessive rake (by UK standards), very loose rigging and a lot of low down mast bend. The mast and sails work together to produce very competitive up-wind performance in a majority of wind conditions, although it was noticeable that Peter Colclough won the last 2 races in lighter wind strengths.

The shore side and, in particular, the social side were well organised by the Japanese. The fleet was treated to three excellent parties (one with a magnificent firework display especially put on for the 505s) and often informal arrangements were made to meet in nearby restaurants. The camaraderie and friendliness amongst the fleet was an outstanding feature of the regatta – probably the best in recent years. In this spirit, Paul Elvstrom, who finished twelfth overall, was heard to comment that he did not feel his age was a disadvantage – merely that he had not practised enough!