



Against a stormy sky and the Golden Gate Bridge, Mike Martin and Jeff Nelson lead Bergan and Lanzinger



Aug. 28, 2009

Views from the Worlds – Day 6

Martin/Nelson: It's their 505 Worlds to win

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Mike Martin and crew Jeff Nelson, down in points to Mike Holt and crew Carl Smit and faced with lighter winds than they would prefer, pulled off a clutch victory Friday to carry the championship of the 2009 SAP 505 Worlds into the final race Saturday.

Now, after scoring their fifth win in eight races while Holt/Smit finished ninth and with both discard scores cashed in, Martin/Nelson lead with 7 points to 12, as all other contenders slipped out of contention.

Martin/Nelson finished 50 seconds ahead of late chargers Dalton Bergan and crew Fritz Lanzinger, who have sailed the hottest boat of all (1-5-2) over the last three races to climb into fourth place.

The title showdown will start at noon on the Berkeley Circle course in the East Bay, where wispy winds the last two days have severely strained the venue's reputation for big breeze. Especially Friday, with the temperature in the mid-70s---that's a heat wave here, even in summer---and families and dogs flocked to the beach, the orange wind sock at the Crissy Field staging area where kite boards rule drooped like yesterday's noodles.

Weather watchers blamed it on the dissipating tropical storm Ignacio off Baja California whose thermal spinoff has turned California sailing sites into Golden Ponds.

Early in the afternoon St. Francis YC race manager John Craig drove the committee boat around to the beach, fired two



Martin/Nelson about to start behind the Gate Boat



Holt and Smit launch off Crissy Field on a rare summer-like day

shotgun blasts and hoisted the red and white AP flag to hold boats from launching, as if anyone was seriously considering it. Then a short time later, when scout boats outside the Golden Gate Bridge reported wind conditions building optimistically, the hold was lifted and race committee boats enlisted to tow almost everybody the six miles downwind to the course for a 3 o'clock start.

This wasn't what either Holt or Martin wanted, preferring, respectively, to just call it a regatta or wait for much more wind.

Otherwise, before his worst finish of the week, Holt was in position to end it all with a day to spare by driving Martin/Nelson deep into the fleet. They had already spent both of their discards brought on by a non-finish with a broken mast and a 12th place in fluky winds Thursday.

"We didn't manage to do it today," said a disappointed Holt. "We put him in a tough spot, and I thought we had him."

The tough spot was not only in the standings but at the start when Holt/Smit stalked Martin/Nelson into the Gate (a.k.a. "rabbit") Start, and put themselves in the controlling leeward position but couldn't make it stick. They moved up the line in the last moments before they would tack to starboard and cross behind the "rabbit"---this time Howie Hamlin and crew Paul Cayard, who earned the honor as the 10th-place finisher in the previous race.

Martin said, "They got under us but we sailed up the line and found a hole. We tacked and got off the line."

Meanwhile, Holt/Smit fell into the second row as they looked desperately for a place to tack toward the line, and by the time they crossed they had all but lost sight of their rivals. They were as deep as 20th at one point and never threatened Martin/Nelson again.

Over the 3 1/2 laps to an upwind finish, Martin said, "We were keeping an eye on them the whole race."

Bergan led the race midway, running away from everybody except Martin/Nelson, the only boat that passed them, which happened downwind.

"He cleared us by only a foot," Dalton said.

Dalton credited Lanzinger with much of their success and claimed he has felt no pressure in his rookie effort at the top level of dinghy sailing.

"If I were calling the tactics I'd be nervous," he said. "Fritz makes all the calls. As a skipper you just keep the boat sailing fast."

Then there are the other competitors who make the leaders look good. Two are Steve Kleha, 32, a Stanford University grad



Bergan and Lanzinger have been the hottest team the last 2 days



A tight pack converges at the leeward gate



Steve Kleha and Mattias Kennerknecht: wave of future

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and a financial analyst in real life, and his crew, Mattias Kennerknecht from Germany, who owns the boat.

"I just started sailing 505s seriously a year ago," Kleha said. "Mattias has been bringing me up to speed."

Even in 39th place, they are doing well, considering that they have started and finished every race, which even Martin/Nelson and 64 other boats can't say. Their best finishes are a 16th and 22nd in the first two races.

"There are four major adjustments upwind," Kleha said. "[Mast] rake, vang, ram and centerboard. These boats are highly technical. You'd be surprised how a small adjustment can make a big difference. One day we were sailing upwind and Mattias suggested we move the vang back, and immediately we gained a knot or a knot and a half. You could feel it leap."

That's where Martin and Holt were once. Now they're going for the glory.

What conditions would they like?

"About 18 knots would be nice," Martin said.

SAP is the naming sponsor and APL is the presenting sponsor. Marine Media Alliance, Drystone Berridge Vineyard Estates, Lindsay Art Glass, North Sails, Ronstan and 505 American Section are supporting sponsors.

The leaders

(after 8 of 9 races; 2 discards)

1. Mike Martin/Jeff Nelson, USA, 1-(DNF)-1-1-1-(12)-2-1, 7 points.
2. Mike Holt/Carl Smit, USA, 2-1-2-2-2-3-(4)-(9), 12.
3. Chris Nicholson/Casey Smith, Australia, 4-3-3-3-3-7-(8)-(8), 28.
4. Dalton Bergan/Fritz Lanzinger, USA, 8-8-4-(10)-(15)-1-5-2, 28.
5. Jens Findel/Johannes Tellen, Germany, (72)-5-6-(15)-12-2-3-10, 31.
6. Nick Adamson/Steve Bourdow, USA, 9-2-13-4-4-4-(17)-(14), 36.
7. Howie Hamlin/Paul Cayard, USA, 5-6-(RAF)-7-(14)-5-10-5, 38.
8. Ian Pinnell/Carl Gibbon, Great Britain, 7-(14)-8-13-(20)-10-11-3, 52.
9. Tyler Moore/Geoff Ewenson, USA, 11-13-11-(15)-(16)-8-6-4, 53.
10. Ryan Cox/Stuart Park, USA, 12-11-12-6-8-6-(15)-(22), 55.

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