



New 505 World champions Mike Martin (l.) and Jeff Nelson exchange congratulations at the finish line



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505 Worlds win a breeze for Martin and Nelson

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Mother Nature gave Mike Martin the 18 knots of wind he asked for and he and crew Jeff Nelson took care of the rest of their business Saturday to win the 2009 SAP 505 World Championship with an artistic runaway performance.

And they earned it. Their climactic 46-second victory mirrored their earlier mastery of the cold, strong winds that San Francisco promised but surprisingly substituted with its apparent two days of summer near the end of the week, momentarily taking them off their game.

Earlier, they used one of their discards when they broke their mast in the mud of the shallow Berkeley Circle in the East Bay while running a close second to Mike Holt and crew Carl Smit, had to swallow a 12th place when the breeze turned light and tricky and then needed to recharge their winning form to beat off the bid of Mike Holt and Carl Smit convincingly over the last two days.

From Day 1 it evolved into a two-boat battle for the title. Holt/Smit were second to Martin/Nelson's firsts in four of the first five races--the exception being the formers' win when the latter flipped in a puff and lost their mast. Australia's Chris Nicholson/Casey Smith hung in for three days, while Germany's Jens Findel/Johannes Tellen and the USA's Dalton Bergen/Fritz Lanzinger and Nick Adamson/Steve Bourdow had their moments near the end, but none could threaten the top two.



Martin/Nelson (l.) shadow rivals Holt/Smit into the rabbit start line



Germany's Findel/Tellen lead Martin/Nelson at first windward

After regaining the regatta lead from Holt/Smit in moderate breeze a day earlier, Martin said he'd like to see the wind return to, say, 18 knots for the showdown. He wasn't being greedy; that velocity and more had been standard earlier.

"There was a bit of nervousness at the start," Martin said afterward, "but in the end..."

In the end, after the breeze had built from 12 knots to past 20 in the 3 1/2-lap, hour-and-a-half race, Martin and Nelson were at home in their element again, invincible in their sixth first place in the nine-race series, this time with Adamson/Bourdown second, Nicholson/Smith third and Holt/Smit fourth.

Martin, 44, and Nelson, 34, are from Newport Beach, which may contradict their superiority in heavy weather, but they have been sailing together for 10 years all over the world in all kinds of conditions.

That's also as old as the spare aluminum mast they used for the last seven races with no apparent loss of performance.

Also marking the return of tough sailing were several capsizes and one sinking. Michael and Mark Lazzaro's difficult week---they finished only three races---ended when their number 5281, the oldest boat in the fleet, sank in 10 feet near the leeward gate. They were rescued from the 62-degree water and the boat also was recovered.

Back at the Crissy Field boat yard after the six-mile upwind sail from the race course, Martin and Nelson were greeted with enthusiastic laughs, smiles and hugs by their sailing buddy, Howie Hamlin of Long Beach, and Paul Cayard, his substitute crew for the week. They wound up seventh overall.

Martin was Hamlin's crew when they won the 505 Worlds 10 years ago, and Hamlin noted, "Nobody has ever won the 505 Worlds as a crew and then as a skipper. It's well-deserved. He's worked for it a long time. He loves breeze. He always has."

Cayard said that at 50 "it was a lot of fun" handling spinnakers and hanging out on a trapeze in his boyhood waters, returning to his roots from a long career of sailing America's Cups, Whitbread/Volvo round-the-world races and other big boat ventures.

"I woke up this morning and realized I wouldn't be waking up again to go sailing in a 505," Cayard said, wistfully. "Small boat sailing is what I gave up doing to do what I do 99 per cent of the time now."

Holt/Smit dogged Martin/Nelson into the Gate "rabbit" starting sequence that developed into an odd sort of match race until Martin broke free while running the line on port tack against the starboard tack fleet waiting to cross behind the Gate boat following the rabbit, who was Findel/Tellen.



Later, Martin/Nelson hold a big lead into the leeward gate



USA's Ryan Cox/Stuart Park lead Holt/Smit past windward mark



USA's Michael and Mark Lazzaro's boat is sinking. They survived



Big winds and capsizes returned for the final day of racing

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"We were able to get away just enough to tack to starboard," Martin said, "and when we tacked we were perfectly lined up with a good clear lane, and we were off."

Smit said, "We knew it was going to be tough today. We needed them to make a mistake. They didn't make any mistakes."

Hamlin said, "Holtie did what he could do. He had two days' chances to drive [Martin] down."

Holt said, "We gave it a shot but he was faster. We tried to go for him at the start . . . did everything in our power."

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 top 10

(9 races; 2 discards)

1. Mike Martin/Jeff Nelson, USA, 1-(DNF)-1-1-1-(12)-2-1-1, 8 points.
2. Mike Holt/Carl Smit, USA, 2-1-2-2-2-3-(4)-(9)-4, 16.
3. Chris Nicholson/Casey Smith, Australia, 4-3-3-3-3-7-(8)-(8)-3, 26.
4. Jens Findel/Johannes Tellen, Germany, (72)-5-6-(15)-12-2-3-10-5, 36.
5. Dalton Bergan/Fritz Lanzinger, USA, 8-8-4-10-(15)-1-5-2-(16), 38.
6. Nick Adamson/Steve Bourdow, USA, 9-2-13-4-4-4-(17)-(14)-2, 38.
7. Howie Hamlin/Paul Cayard, USA, 5-6-(RAF)-7-(14)-5-10-5-6, 44.
8. Tyler Moore/Geoff Ewenson, USA, 11-13-11-(15)-(16)-8-6-4-10, 63.
9. Ryan Cox/Stuart Park, USA, 12-11-12-6-8-6-(15)-(22)-8, 63.
10. Ian Pinnell/Carl Gibbon, Great Britain, 7-(14)-8-13-(20)-10-11-3-(DNF), 66.

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