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39 Trofeo S.A.R. Princesa Sofia MAPFRE

Good Friday brings strong breeze for Medal Races Pietra Niemann (GER) crowned “Absolute winner”

The Trofeo S.A.R. Princesa Sofia offered the sailors a beautiful last day with strong breeze, waves and sun for the Medal Races.

The Yngling, Finns and 49ers were the first three classes to hit the water with south-westerly wind ranging from 16 to 25 knots across the bay. Finally the opportunity had arrived for some teams to show their expertise in the breeze and close the gap on their opponents.

It is especially the case for Dutch 470 sailors Marcelien de Koning and Lobke Berkhout. The triple World Champions had already proven they are unbeatable in the breeze. They led the Medal Race from start to finish and defend successfully the Trofeo Princesa Sofia Title they had claim last year. Among the top five all week, the Dutch pair has peaked at the right time.

“We have tried new techniques this week and it is good to see that it finally works out and fall into place. Here is the perfect place to train for Qingdao. We are also training on new tactics for lighter winds. Winning the event here is a really nice bonus.”

Natalia Via-Dufresne and Laia Tutzo (ESP) are conserving their second overall position to take Silver. The British team of Christina Bassadone and Saskia Clark has worked hard to reach the third place of the podium after a slow start in the regatta. The 2007 World Bronze medallists placed second in the Medal Race, after passing the Japanese Ai Kondo and Naoko Kamata on the last downwind. It is enough for the British to take the Bronze on equal points with early leaders Giulia Conti and Giovanna Micol (ITA), relegated to fourth.

With eight races in the top five, including a third in today’s windy Medal race, Gabrio Zandonà and Andrea Trani (ITA) have taken the Trofeo Princesa Sofia title from Alvaro Marinho and Miguel Nunes (POR) who despite winning the Medal Race are placing in a disappointing ninth place overall. *“Our boat is still in transit from Australia and we are using here an old boat.”* The fight was fierce for second place with Gideon Kliger and Udi Gal (ISR) taking fourth place just in front of Sven and Kalle Coster from Holland. With the two teams on equal points, Kliger and Gal take silver as they have a better result on the medal race. The Dutch pair has to settle for Bronze.

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After battling all week against their team mate, the Russian Yngling team of Anna Basalkina, Vlada Ukraintseva and Ekaterina Maximova has sailed away from their rival after winning the Medal Race. Ekaterina Skudina, Diana Krutskikh and Natalia Ivanova finish in last position in the Medal race but managed to stay on the podium on third overall. The World Champions from England, Sarah Ayton, Sarah Webb and Pippa Wilson enjoyed the breeze to sneak in second position.

The regatta trophy changed hands during the 49er Medal Race. The Italians Pietro and Gianfranco Sibello were leading the race and the classification at the first mark but the Ukrainians Rodion Luka and Geogy Leonchuk passed the Italians on the first run to take the lead. The second run could have seen the 2005 World Champion's hopes for the title disappear when they lost control of their boat and capsized. They were just quick enough to restart and cross the line in fourth position. With the Australians finishing between them and the Germans, the Ukrainians have won the regatta on equal points with the German brothers.

The Peckolt brothers had decided to handle carefully the extreme conditions: *“There were about five boats nose-diving out there. So we were in control mode. We could have passed the Australians but decided to play it safe. Of course we didn’t see the Ukrainian capsize or we would have pushed harder! It was really fun out there!”*

The Olympic champions Iker Martinez and Xabi Fernandez (ESP) mastered the breeze and waves to win the race.

Rafael Trujillo is the second Spanish Medal Race winner. The Athens Silver medallist had not yet sailed to his full potential with a slow start in the regatta. A victory in the Finn Medal race will comfort the Spanish who is working hard to find his pace again. Ben Ainslie (GBR) who had already won the event yesterday placed fifth in the Medal Race. Ivan Kljakovic Gaspic (CRO) added another good performance (second in the Medal race) to his results to conserve his second position and increase his lead on Zach Railey to 30 points. The American takes Bronze.

Zofia Klepacka (POL) adds another victory to her results with a bullet in the Medal Race in the RS:X. She takes bronze in the regatta behind Alessandra Sensini (ITA) in first position and Marina Alabau (ESP) second. The Italian who had won the “Absolute winner trophy” last year is conserving her title.

The podium is unchanged in the Men division after the Medal race won by Richard Stauffacher from Switzerland. World #3 Nick Dempsey (GBR) has crossed the line in third place to win the title behind Przemyslaw Miarczyński (POL), second in the regatta and overall. Fabian Heidegger (ITA) places sixth in the Medal Race and third in the ranking.

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Skandia team GBR sailors claim the top two places in the Laser fleet. Undefeated all week, Paul Goodison adds a third Trofeo Princesa Sofia MAPFRE to his earlier victories in Palma. Team mate Nick Thompson will take the Silver medal. Rasmus Myrgren (SWE) won comfortably the Medal Race to settle for Bronze.

With only seven boats, the Tornados have sailed an ultimate race won by Santiago Lange and Carlos Espinola (ARG) in third position overall. The French are victorious with only top five results. Second place goes to the German Johannes Polgar and Florian Spalteholz.

Petra Niemann is the “Absolute Winner” Trofeo Princesa Sofia MAPFRE. The German has scored the least points over the classes with 10 points overall. The prestigious Trophy will be awarded tonight to Petra Niemann by H.R.H. Queen Sofia of Spain.

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Pictures are available to download from the website www.trofeoprincesasofia.org with credit to be given as instructed. Rough footage will also be available throughout the week with a fee.

For more information please contact Corinne McKenzie on corinne.mckenzie@orange.fr or on the Spanish mobile: +34 648 788 659 or by sms only on +33 670101813

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