

Global

Economic Crisis Can't Stall Langkawi Regatta

By Scott Murray



Beautiful spinnakers take to waters around Langkawi Island during RLIR '09.

Winds, gusting to 20 knots, and beautiful sunny weather overrode the gloom surrounding the global economic crisis ensuring the success of the 7th Annual Royal Langkawi International Regatta. Held from January 6-10, 33 boats competed in six classes, and regatta race committee Ahmad Zailani Bashah (otherwise known as Zack) was unperturbed by the low number of entrants, citing the global economic meltdown as

cause, and convinced that the numbers would bounce back up in 2010. For those who don't know, Langkawi is a group of either 104 islands at high tide, or 99 islands at low tide, located off the northwest coast of Peninsular Malaysia. "Lang" stands for brown eagle in Malay while "kawi" is a local manganese stone. There's a huge monument of an eagle clutching manganese stone, which greets Langkawians and visitors near the island's busy Kuala Jetty.



Jetik & Team Pryde compete in Racing Class at Langkawi Regatta.

2009 Entrants

Six classes competed in this year's regatta: Racing, IRC 1, Premier Cruising, Sports (Longtee & Platts), Multihull and Club Cruising. And participating boats flew colours from Australia, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Guernsey, Holland, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, and, of course, Malaysia.

Five boats vied for the Malaysian PM's Challenge Trophy in the Racing Class including 3-time champion Ray Roberts DK46 Quantum Racing, just off wins at the Phuket King's Cup and Class O in the Sydney to Hobart Race. Neil Pryde's Welbourne 52, *Hi-Fi*, which sat atop the Asian Yacht Grand Prix (AYGP) leader board going into the event, and Frank Pong's R/P75 *Jalik*, the fastest boat in the regatta, were both looking for line honours. And three-time champion Peter Ahern was back with a refitted Farr 40, *YOZ*, seeking to recapture a crown he had won three times. The Farr 520, *Zuhrah*, representing the Malaysian Navy, and skipped by Mohd Razali Mansor, rounded out the top class.

The IRC Class 1 saw three boats enter as Jan Matthews Sunsil 35 Princess Sharda was pitted against Alan Rimington's 32-ft Atlantis Star and Mike Van Zyl's 24-ft *Jandi*.

The Premier Cruising Class saw 7 vessels take to the waters in and around Kuala Harbour: Anthony Hastings' *Bahy Tanga 99 Degrees E* (the Raja Muda Premier Class winner) competed against Vince Chan's Titan 36, *Mata Hari*, Stuart Williamson's Beneteau 34.7, *Scandia Endeavour* of

Whidy, Helmut Schutte's Beneteau 45, *Aquavit V*, Jeff Harris' Elan 40, *Rapsallion*, and Nids Degenkolv's IOR 3/4 ton, *Phoenix*.

Sportsboats competed in two different divisions with 3 Chinese Longtee Premier Thompson registered against five youth teams from Australia, Singapore and Malaysia sailing *Plan 25s*.

No Fireflys competed in the Multihull Division, which saw three catamarans, Bill Webb's 41-ft *Out of the Bag*, Bob Brindley's *Whiteheaven 11.5 Xcariot*, and Tom Milner's 33-ft *Seckrongkuk*, race against each other.

Finally, the Club-Cruiser Class had 8 entrants: Kevan Perrins Oyster 43.5, *Rusalka*, Keith Garry's 41-ft *BenetX Espirito*, Christopher Kingsley-Smith's 41-ft *Amanulla Star*, Henning Lenz's 33-ft *My Toy*, Des Kearns 46-ft *Bad Habit*, Gordon Hargreaves 45-ft *Sac Uelchin*, Gavin Wdellman's Hallberg Rassy 53, *Rascal*, and Goranko Fritlic's *Karuba IV*.

There were five days of racing the first day was in Kuala Harbour; the second day, offshore; the third day featured the "Zack Around the Island Race", the fourth day was again offshore, and the fifth was back to the shelter of Kuala Harbour. Conditions were good on every day.

Day One saw the Start Boat drag anchor forcing an AP flag-off for Club Cruising while the Race Committee aboard *Niav PA-4* reset the line. The *Navy PA-4* dragged anchor again at the finish, but the Finishing Officer adeptly noted the line bearings and was able to call the same line angle for each finisher. In Day Two *Jetik* snagged the pin buoy

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around its keel, and had to send a diver in to rectify the situation. Day Four saw the Longtze, *Christargo*, suffer a damaged rudder forcing it out of the race.

The Racing Class, at Ray Roberts suggestion, decided to add two more races to their schedule half-way through the week so they ended up sailing a total of ten races over the five days.

Day Three was a little different. Competitors had long been clamouring Zack to "have a round the island race", so he acquiesced, but due to the unpredictable wind conditions in the afternoon, the Club Cruising class was allowed to start on an individual basis with their elapsed time being recorded as per usual. For those familiar with the island, the first group of starters (Racing, Premier Cruising, Sportsboats) set off from the SW corner of Tanjung Genting Island, before heading north to a point off Pulau Kentor Kechil. The second group (IRC 1 and Multihull) turned into Tyson Strait to reach a gated point along the shores of



The Longtze stretch.

Pulau Singha Besar. Both groups then set courses for a marker gate located west of Pulau Kelara in Bass Harbor and then sailed to the finish line off the main town of Kuala. As the scenery in the southern part of Langkawi is spectacular almost all competitors were unanimous in their desire to have this race repeated next year.

Day Four saw races competed in the outside waters of Langkawi with Racing, Premier, and Sportsboats sailing three times around a Windward-Leeward course, while IRC, Multihulls and Club Cruising sailed further out into open waters.

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The Commodore's Challenge Cup for Club Registered Cruisers went to *Banz* X Epsilon, skippered by Keith Garry.

Second place went to Christopher Kingsley-Smith's *Amandla* Star while Des Kearns/Jerry Bodens *Bud Habits* took third.

The LADA-IRC Challenge Trophy for the IRC Class and Premier Cruising Class was captured by *Scandia Endeavour* of Whitey, skippered by Stuart Williamson. Anthony Hastings Baby Tonga 99 Degrees East took second and Nick Depasulo/OR 3/4 Ton Phoenix managed third overall.

Then the Langkawi Sports Trophy for the sports boat class was won by SMU, skippered by Lim Zijie



Malay women compete in the sportsboat class.



Quantum Racing.



Neil Pryde's *Hi-Fi* crew hard at work.

Christopher Gaetan Verbege's *Longtze 2 - Exocet* was second, while the Royal Malaysian Navy's *Navy 1*, skippered by Mohd Masynn Rahmat took third.

Finally, the Malaysian Multihull Challenge Cup, for participants in the Multihull class went to *Xcatriot*, skippered by Bob Brindley. Tim Milner's *Schroghul* finished second overall and Bill Webb's *Out of the Bag* rounding out the class.

This year's regatta established the "Tunku Abdullah Sportsmanship" Award as a tribute to the founding chairman and 1st Commodore of the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club, Almarhum Tan Sri Abdullah, who died in Kuala Lumpur in August 2008. Teams participating in the event voted on the trophy, which went to the boat displaying the best sportsmanship on and off the water. My Toy in Club Cruising was the first recipient, with Henning Lentz and crew being the last boat to finish on the last day of the regatta.

Henning described My Toy as "designed in the 50's and built in the 60's, mainly with fun and enjoyment in mind".

The Royal Langkawi Yacht Club

Wicky Sundram is the Executive Director of the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club. He joined the Yacht Club in 2000 as its General Manager, but he had been working for Melewar Holdings, who used to own the club, since 1995. It was the founder of the Yacht Club, and then chairman of Melewar Holdings, Almarhum Tan Sri Abdullah, who offered Wicky the post. At first, he was worried because he knew nothing about yachting, or marinas, although he had experience in the service industry. So he asked for three months to study the industry and he threw

himself wholeheartedly into the project.

Melewar was originally brought in by former Prime Minister Mahir to help develop Langkawi (the two were close friends) and Tunku Abdullah's original plan was to build a hotel. But at about the same time, he bought a 52ft motor yacht, *Putri Maimunah*, and came upon the idea of building a marina in Kuala Harbour head instead (Behak Marina was the only marina in the area at the time).

The Club opened in late 1996, was fully operational by mid 1997 and hosted the final leg of the Raja Muda Regatta that same year (the Blue Water Rally also started using the Club as a stopover). It had 47 berths, and a three-metre depth at low tide, but by 2000 had a 90% occupancy rate.

But the public ferry dock's proximity continually caused problems because its wash would swamp the Club, so Tunku Abdullah decided the Club needed a breakwater and more berths. This 9-month renovation was completed in time for the 2002 Raja Muda Regatta. 154 berths were added as well as a 340-metre seawall, making it the largest wet-berth marina in Malaysia. Shower facilities were also installed in the clubhouse for visiting yachts, and a number of marine-related businesses (e.g. Sun Sail & Simpson Marine) were also set up on the property. The RLYC can berth 4 yachts 60 metres in length wide-wise across the top of the pier, and has space for 2 more 30-metre yachts at the end of the pontoons.

Then Tunku Abdullah decided Langkawi needed its own regatta, so the idea for the RLIR was born and the first one was launched in March of 2003. Organizers, hoping for 30 yachts, were pleasantly surprised when 63 boats registered from 9 countries. The timing of the inaugural regatta

coincided with the official opening of the marina extension and seawall.

Wicky says the RLYC's advantage is that it is the only regional regatta organized by a marina, and that all participants get complimentary berthing. Surprisingly, Wicky himself is not a devoted sailor; he likes to say "pilots don't manage airports" in his defense. His challenge now is to build a 40m, 72-room boutique hotel, which would turn the RLYC into a marina resort.

The RLYC has been described as a "world-class full-service yachting haven with the lines of a prestigious club and all the pleasures of a resort." You can repair, refuel and restock; and there's easy access to port clearance at the marina department, as well as immigration and customs. Services include storage, mail, laundry, and rubbish clearance and 24-hour security. There's a swimming pool and banquet facilities for 300 as well as a media and meeting room, bar and restaurant. To top it off, the RLYC was awarded the Christoffe-Asian Boating Award for "Best Asian Marina/Yacht Club in 2008".

Elaborating more on how the RLYC came to be, Rear Commodore of the RLYC Tunku Soraya Dakhil said her father Tunku Abdullah "loved Langkawi, and was a close friend of ex-Prime Minister Mahir Mohamed, who also had a great love for Langkawi. He wanted to see development in Langkawi take off to a greater extent and since it's blessed by beautiful islands and beautiful ocean, the logical way thing to do was incorporate the two: water + land = yacht club."

"He traveled extensively through the world so as many yacht clubs as he could get to (he particularly like Cascais in Portugal and the clubs he visited in Chile and the Mediterranean), to get ideas for the kind of club he wanted to build in Langkawi. He wanted to build something that was open to everyone, which was relaxed and friendly and embodied what Langkawi Island was about. He was also drawn to the sailing fraternity, because sailors are very open, very relaxed, very sociable beings as well as being very strong-willed and dedicated. Those were the influences that went into building the RLYC. It's unique in that it draws you in from the land and it yet it's so welcoming from the sea. The casual, friendly atmosphere of the staff is something all sailors enjoy coming back for and that's a legacy my father passed on to the staff: to always be welcoming, to be free-spirited and to always enjoy life."

"He also wanted a club where multimillionaires and crew alike could sit around the bar together,



RILR nice spinnaker.



Wicky Sundram

Wicky Sundram 65



Peter Ahern & Yo!2 at sea try to reclaim little Yo! took three times.

Growing the Sport (Put picture of Yo!2 besides this)

Peter Ahern won three RLIRs on Yo!, which he sold when he moved back to Perth three years ago. Yo!2, his new yacht, was built in DK Yachts in Malacca, is eight-years-old and Ahern purchased it in 2007. Besides the RLIR, he enjoys Phuket Raceweek because it's right in the middle of the Australian winter. He's now the Vice Commodore of the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club in Perth.

Ahern says the RLIR is "user-friendly. It's based in a nice marina with good facilities, all the boats are tied down, so you can hose them down, and fold the sails on the dock, there's good entertainment, and a nice bar and restaurant. In other regattas, you have to anchor your boat, get a dinghy ashore, and there are no facilities."

On growing the sport in Southeast Asia, he says, "The strongest sailing nations have strong administration and strong sailing club structures. You need a strong yachting association, which provides good training and racing programmes on a regular basis. Southeast Asia tends to focus on

regattas - too many regattas, which are expensive and time consuming to participate in. Whereas, in other parts of the world people sail, and build up the sport with club racing on the weekends. I think that in this part of the world, there should be far more emphasis on weekend racing with local sailors than such a focus on international regattas, where people come in the outside, compete and then go home without leaving a lasting legacy.

"In Perth, and other clubs in Australia, we have a dedicated, talented, group of people running an organized system that feeds sailors from the dinghy to the Americas Cup level. But yachting is still considered an elitist sport in many parts of Asia and enjoying an ordinary yacht club here is more expensive than enjoying a top yacht club in Australia. Good yacht racing can be done on simple budgets, with simple events, all good sailors want is quality racing."

www.langkawiregatta.com

(Photos courtesy of Royal Langkawi International Regatta '09)

Asia Yachting Grand Prix (AYGP)

Points are awarded based on the Skipper and Yacht's performance over nine selected **Solar A1 Grand Prix** racing class events (Malaysia 2, Hong Kong 2, Thailand 3 plus Singapore and the Philippines with 1 piece) held each year that fairly grades the competing skipper's ability to successfully run a racing campaign in Asian waters over the 2008-09 season.

At the final AYGP event in Koh Samui the "Champion Skipper" and the "Yacht of the Year" will join the tailored Armani Koh Samui Blue Blazer and receive the Perpetual AY Cup traditionally filled with chilled champagne at a magnificent prize giving party on the lawns of the Centara Grand Beach Resort at Chaweng Beach. Events: China Coast Regatta HK to Vietnam Race Raja Muda Selangor Int'l Regatta Phuket King's Cup Royal Langkawi Int'l Regatta Singapore Straits Regatta President's Cup Top of the Gulf Koh Samui Regatta (<http://asiayachting.com/news/AYGP-08-09.htm>)

chat and learn from one another. He wanted something intimately friendly. Our location is good as Langkawi is a gateway to the Indian Ocean and Indonesia and even in the monsoon season the seas are not rough like they are on the east coast of Malaysia (the outer islands protected the main island from being hit hard during the 2004 tsunami.)

Soraya grew up in New Zealand, which was where she learned sail. In 2002, she put together the first women's team to compete in the Raja Muda Regatta as way of getting Malaysian women involved in sailing (like Tiffany Koo is one who got started sailing that way). One of her father's aims was to promote sailing in Southeast Asia. Soraya jokes that there are as many yachts in New Zealand as there are in all of Southeast Asia. She's out to change that.

The irony is that Soraya's dad (like Wicky) was not a sailor himself. And even though he didn't grow up near the sea - he was from Negri Sembilan, which is located in a valley, surrounded by mountains - he loved to be out on the water. It really is incredible that he had such a passion for the sport considering he wasn't a committed sailor.

In closing, Soraya says, "Langkawi is magical place, it's so tranquil, you can really bear peace here, you can truly unwind. When I first came there was one traffic light and that wasn't that long ago. And now there's charter flights arriving from all over the world."

Quantum Racing Skip LOVES SEA Racing Circuit

By Scott Murray



Ray Roberts the owner/skipper of Quantum Racing hails from Sydney, Australia and has been sailing for the past 30 years. His boat, a DK 46, was built in Malacca. It's called Quantum Racing because he's in the sail-making business.

"I have been a keen regatta competitor in Southeast Asia for the past ten years," Ray says in describing what draws him to this part of the world. "The twenty years before that, I spent racing ocean racing boats and Olympic-class yachts, but I grew tired of the Australian Ocean Racing scene, so I decided to sail to new destinations. My first choice was to come to Asia, starting with the Darwin-Ambon Race in 1994, then I did the Raja Muda in 1995 (placed second) my first Phuket King's Cup in 1995 (which I won with Millennium) and the Singapore Straits Regatta (won that in Jan 06). That whetted my appetite for sailing in Asia. I enjoy the culture differences and I find the people of the region friendly and charming. The regattas are a good mix of racing and social activities.

"Asia is also an exciting place to be now, because it's high-growth, high energy and you can see developing nations growing. You see dramatic change in the social structure of life as the standard of living increases each year. That's also reflected in the sailing fleet, which gets better and better each year and attracts more international competition. The level of the competition in the top five or six boats in the IRC racing class is as good as any in the world.

Ray is in the sail making business. He has a sail loft in Sydney and has opened a new loft in the Changi Sailing Club in Singapore. He doesn't get involved in the actual sail production other than to give guidance - he's more of a strategic advisor. Quantum Sail Design is part of a global organization,

Quantum Sails, which has lofts all over the world, and headquarters in Michigan. Ray believes they make the fastest sails in the world.

Ray's primary business is recruitment and industrial labor hire. "I do work on offshore oil rigs supplying engineers, dredge operators and a whole range of specialist staff to the marine and oil industries as well as

would normally take four. So two years in a row, I've seen my chance slip away." But, he has won most of the other Australian yacht races several times, including the last Brisbane-Gladstone Race.

Ray didn't start sailing until his late 20s, when a neighbour asked him to start sailing in a homebuilt yacht in Sydney Harbour. He quickly fell in love with the ocean and the sport of sailing and jumped from social sailing into the big time with the sailing class, trying to grab a spot on Australian Olympic team several times. Then he bought a 40-ft ocean racing yacht, *Impetuous*, and started racing on the east coast of Australia from Sydney to Hobart, and all the way north to Cairns. Then he took on the challenge of the Coral Sea Classic from Cairns to Fort Moresby, winning it twice (in 1993-1994) on Millennium. He sold Millennium in 1998, then bought Hollywood Boulevard, which he won Raja Muda Regatta with in 2002, before selling it and purchasing Quantum Racing five years ago.

Asked what appealed to him about the RLIR, he says, "The Tunku Abdulrahman really sponsored the sport of sailing and he established the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club. To see it grow from a few boats in the marina to over a hundred yachts with talent from all over the world is incredible. I believe his daughter, Princess Soraya, will continue the legacy of her father in promoting sailing in Langkawi because it's such a special place, in fact some of the sights are world heritage site listed."

For a man who has seen so much success in both the sporting and business worlds, Ray is unusually hard on himself, tending at times to focus on his few failures, rather than his many accomplishments. But then again, that's probably the drive that spurred him on to sail better, win more regattas and build better, faster sails.

