



Leaders beach boats in final order: (l-r) Howie Hamlin, Michael Coxon and John Winning

10th annual

18ft Skiff International Regatta



San Francisco, Calif.

Aug. 21-26, 2011

Aug. 26, 2011

Friday's weather: Wind 14-20k WNW; air temp. 64F.

Howie does he do it? Hamlin wins 6th title

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif.

It's been said about this City by the Bay that if you don't like the weather, just wait a few minutes.

Echo that about racing sailboats here. Howie Hamlin, a 58-year-old land broker from Southern California, has now won six of the 10 annual 18ft Skiff International Regatta hosted by the St. Francis Yacht Club, but Friday's clutch scenario played out like the Perils of Pauline.

Hamlin, with crew Matt Noble and Paul Allen on CST Composites, went into the last day with a one-point lead over Australia's John (Woody) Winning on Yandoo and five points over Michael Coxon's Thurlow Fisher Lawyers---the top three boats all week.



**Winners (l-r) Matt Noble,
Howie Hamlin, Paul Allen**

The latter performed like the defending

champions they were, winning two of six races when Coxon, suffering from a neck injury, turned the tiller over to the veteran Trevor Barnabas. Until the very end Friday, with Coxon back, it seemed they would win the last three, as well (details below).

Hamlin won three of the 10 races, including the finale. Both of Friday's contests were two laps around the 1.1-nautical mile windward-leeward set from inside the Golden Gate Bridge to just past Alcatraz Island, where Al Capone hung out and Burt Lancaster played the Birdman.

Those were the days, but Hamlin lent his own drama to the scene Friday. He led early in the first race, then followed Coxon in the Australian's 47-second win while keeping an eye on Winning, who was third.

Then the drama got weird. As the chill breeze built from 14 to 16 knots and touched 20 at times, Hamlin led again in the second race until trouble struck at the leeward mark.

"I called for the [spinnaker] drop a couple of boat lengths too soon," he said, "and then you have to run real square and slow ... my mistake. We went from first to sixth in a matter of 30 seconds. That's how good this fleet is."

As Coxon seized the lead and all but disappeared into the misty fog, Hamlin's prospects for the regatta suddenly tanked. Winning cruised into second place with three boats between him and his longtime American rival---ample margin to assure him of victory overall.

But it wasn't quite over. As the pack trailing Coxon ran downwind, Winning jibed left toward Alcatraz to set up his final line to the mark. Hamlin also had played that route successfully, but this time he couldn't jibe because Nick Press's Australian entry, SMEG, was close on his port hip blocking the move.

No problem. As tactics turned out, this time right was the better way to go. Hamlin and Press crossed and rounded 13 seconds ahead of Winning---game on again!

"It's easy when you have a little boat speed and



Hamlin (r.) and Winning blow through the mid-course gate



Coxon and crew almost won the last three races



Winning's Yandoo meets a classic at Alcatraz



The leaders sort themselves out

[Hi-res photo gallery](#)

you go the right way," Hamlin said.

So suddenly CST was in second place again, and if Thurlow Fisher seemed out of reach, about to tack for the finish line, just wait.

Allen, CST's forward crew, recalled, "I looked up and saw they were stalled. I wondered what was going on, and then I saw 20 boat lengths behind them [crew member] Trent [Barnabas] in the water swimming ... like, here's our chance."

Barnabas' hiking trapeze line had failed at a very inconvenient time. By the time Coxon could collect him, CST had blown by for the win and a final three-point margin over Coxon and five over Winning.

Luck---good or bad---often makes a difference in any game, but skill and good gear are more consistent weapons.

"Jay [Glaser of Glaser Sails] has built a second version of a spinnaker for us and that made a big difference," Hamlin said. "Woody always used to crush us downwind, and now we were faster than him downwind."

And although they entered the week with concern about a lack of body ballast that might handicap them upwind, it wasn't a problem.

"We're light," Hamlin said, "30 kilos lighter than the heavies ... 72 pounds. If we can still go with the heavies that's good."

Also verified once again: "That all just goes to show that in skiff racing it isn't over until you cross the finish line," Hamlin said.

Winning wasn't happy---"Early in the week we were fast on the wind," he said---but he was encouraged by the turnout of five local boats by the Skiff Sailing Association and a 15-boat fleet overall.

"The bottom end of the fleet is getting better here, and there's more of them," he said.

See [daily video highlights](#) produced by Gecko Productions of Australia with expert commentary by Bob Killick.

Final standings

(10 races, including two discards; skippers listed first)

1. CST Composites, USA, Howie Hamlin/ Matt Noble/Paul Allen, 2-3-1-(5)-(5)-1, 1-2-2-2-1, 14 points.
2. Thurlow Fisher Lawyers, Australia, Michael Coxon/Aaron Links/Trent Barnabas, (7)-1-6-1-(16/OCS)-2-3-1-1-2, 17.
3. Yandoo, Australia, John Winning/David Gibson/Andrew Hay, 1-2-3-2-3-(5)-1-(5)-3-4, 19.
4. CT Sailbattens, New Zealand, Alex Vallings/Chris Hiller/Josh McCormack, (6)-(6)-4-4-2-3-6-3-5-5, 32.
5. SMEG, Australia, Nick Press/Daniel Phillips/Brant Demis, 3-(7)-2-(6)-6-6-4-4-6-3, 34.
6. Maersk Line, Australia, Graham Catley/Nick Catley/Riley Dean, 4-(9)-7-9-4-8-9-(13)-3-6, 51,
7. Harken, Australia, Glenn Raphael/Ben Lawrie/Matt McKinlay, 8-4-11-7-(16/OCS)-7-5-7-(12)-8, 57.
8. SLAM/Mounts Bay WA, Australia, Grant Rollerson/Justin Healey/Marco Schuermann, (11)-5-5-3-1-4-(16/DNF)-16/DNF-16/DNS, 61.
9. Panasonic Lumix, Australia, Jonathan Whitty/Mike Martin/James Hozack, 9-8-(13)-10-7-(16/DNF)-7-6-7-10, 64.
10. Yamaha, New Zealand, Dave McDiarmid/Andrew Archibald/Chris Burgess, 5-10-9-(11)-8-10-10-9-(16/DNF)-7, 68.
11. White Lightning, USA, Patrick Whitmarsh/Charlie Smythe/Mark Breen, (10)-(12)-10-8-9-9-8-8-8-9, 69.
12. USA Black, USA, Skip McCormack/Jody McCormack/Polish Mike, 15-13-8-(16/DNF)-10-(16/DNF)-11-12-9-12, 90.
13. Death Dealer, USA, Brian Malouf/John Gilmour/Joe Penrod, 13-11-(14)-12-13-(16/DNF)-12-10-11-11, 93.
14. O'Canada, USA, David Rasmussen/ John Gray/Trevor Bozina, 12-14-12-13-11-11-13-(16/DNF)-10-(16/DNF), 96.
15. Love Machine, USA, Chad Freitas/Katie Love/Daniel Roberts, 14-(16/DNF)-16/DNF-16/DNF-12-16/DNF-16/DNF-11-13-16/DNF, 114.

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