

Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Great Britain Shines on Day One of Blind Match Racing Championship

Vicki Sheen (GBR) has won each of her four matches on the first day of the IFDS Disabled Sailing International Championship, 2011, Homerus Blind Match Racing. Royal Perth Yacht Club is conducting the event with racing on the Swan River's Matilda Bay.

The IFDS Blind Match Racing Championship is being sailed in Sonar keelboats using the Homerus Autonomous Sailing system. Three acoustic buoys, each with a unique signal, define the course and boats have their own sound signal that changes when on port or starboard tack.

A crew of three sailors classified as B1, B2 or B3 under the IBSA Classification System make-up teams with a collective maximum of 5 IBSA points. The helmsperson must be classification B1 and the gender is mixed, with a minimum of one female and one male team member. A sighted observer appointed by the race committee is also aboard.

Experimental Appendix CBS (Appendix C for Blind Sailing) has been developed for the ISAF Racing Rules of Sailing to accommodate the specific needs of this sailor group. This event will be used to review this proposed Appendix to the Racing Rules of Sailing with umpires, race officials and athletes contributing feedback.

The International Association for Disabled Sailing (IFDS) is seeking to introduce blind match racing as a new discipline within the Paralympic Sailing Competition commencing in 2020. This event is the first sailed in the proposed new three person format.

PRO John Rosser had racing underway by 10am today in a shifty south-easterly varying from 3-10 knots. The breeze had freshened and moved to the south-west by early afternoon and boats were reefed to complete the final matches in 18-22 knots. The Sonar is a quick boat in these flat water conditions, requiring fast decision-making and placing an emphasis on boat handling and teamwork.

Today was a perfect start to the championship for Sheen, who is sailing with Nicholas Donnini on mainsheet and Dennis Manning on headsail. Sheen and Manning teamed for the 2010 IFDS Blind Match Racing World Championships on Lake Garda last June. She is the second ranked sailor competing in Perth.

The other two teams to perform well on day one were Russell Lowry (NZL), sailing with Tom Donaghy and Paulien Eitjes, and Luigi Bertanza (ITA) sailing with Alessandro Malapiero and Elisabetta Bardella. Lowry won three of his four matches, while Bertanza won two of three.

Bertanza was the winning helmsman in the 2010 IFDS Blind Match Racing World Championships on Lake Garda. Lowry's headsail trimmer, Paulien Eitjes, has won Homerus International Match Racing Championships in 2007 and 2008.

Racing continues until Saturday March 26. For more information about the event, visit www.rpyc.com.au/index.php?id=121

ENDS

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Photo Captions:

1. Close racing in a freshening breeze on Matilda Bay. Sheen (GBR) v Forth (AUS).
2. Vicki Sheen (GBR) won four or four matches on day one.
3. Luigi Bertanza (ITA) had two wins on day one.
4. Grennan and Sheen, both from Great Britain, enter for their match on day one.