



## BMW City Challenge Yacht Racing

Thursday April 27<sup>th</sup> 2006

Andy Johns of Cornwallis Elt took his crew of Allie Bennet, Andrew Wilson, Toby Stevenson and Dave Rolfe into an early lead in the 2006 BMW City Challenge yachting series which opened on Tuesday evening (25<sup>th</sup> April) with an impressive performance of two bullets and a three – yacht racing jargon for two wins and a third place. But the crew have a long way to go before they can book their flights to Valencia and the BMW/ Oracle America's Cup base, the very attractive main prize in this season-long, City-based evening sailing series. There are four more Tuesday evening regattas, each with three races to sail, to complete Heat 1 – and there are five heats in all. The eight top scoring crews from the five heats then race-off in a grand final on September 6<sup>th</sup> to decide the winner.

Racing is held each Tuesday evening in Berkeley Marine-owned First Class 8s, the pretty little racing yachts moored off the Novotel, hard by the ExCel building, at Royal Victoria Dock and the series, sponsored by BMW UK Ltd as part of the larger BMW yachting sponsorship topped-out by the BMW/ Oracle America's Cup challenge, is run by the Royal Thames Yacht Club, whose elegant club house is in Knightsbridge. The Club first ran yacht racing on the Thames in 1775, and has been in existence ever since.

Cornwallis were up against some good opposition, and Andy Johns will need to stay on form to keep in front, although Tuesday's performance was impressive. Gregor Logan, steering the Royal Thames's own entry, looked to have the measure of Johns, almost beating him in the first race and then rolling past on the first downwind leg of the second to go on not only to win but to let John Buckley of Citigroup through into second. Then in the third race of the evening – sailed in light and tricky conditions not helped by the failing light – Logan despite slightly fluffing an otherwise perfect start looked to be sailing away with the race while Johns was buried somewhere near the back of the fleet. Sail away is what Logan did – straight into a mirror-smooth calm spot and had the galling experience of seeing the following fleet sail past him on either side. As the catspaw breeze flickered back into life and then strengthened again Johns emerged from the pack stuck at the weather mark, his crew executed a neat spinnaker hoist and he glided away, never to be caught.

Heat Two of the BMW City Challenge will begin next Tuesday at 6.30pm in the Royal Victoria Dock (the balcony of the Novotel provides the perfect race-watching vantage point) with teams from Citigroup, Chris Prentice, Deutsche Bank, Ernst & Young, Daniel Uzel, Accenture, and BMW themselves competing.

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