



2021 SB20 Asian Grand Slam & Asia Pacific Championship

- Final Day -

8 February 2021

As if by magic, the strong North Easterly breeze and blue cloudless skies continued for the third and final day of the 2021 SB20 Asia Pacific Championships which were being hotly contested by a 24 strong fleet. In waters off the powdery white sand palm fringed beaches of Singapore's East Coast, the crews were treated to a typical Singapore sight of dragon boats plying the beach front waters as they approached the racing area for the last 4 races in the series.

Overnight, the race committee had adjusted the course boundaries to bring the fleet closer to the massed throng of surrounding ships. This, combined with the always growing spectator fleet, meant the sailors felt very much as if they were in a cauldron of SB20 sailing. A cauldron under which the fires had been lit and the final placings were starting to bubble to the surface.

With a growing sense of anticipation, the racing commenced at the appointed hour. To add to the pressure felt by the point score leaders, after a few general recalls, which saw the committee support RIB zooming back and forth in front of the fleet displaying the first substitute flag, the race committee signalled its intentions with the Black Flag. Anyone identified on the wrong side of the starting line was to be eliminated from the race. An excellent start was required for any team looking to etch its name on the magnificent trophy waiting on the docks of the opulent 1^o15 Marina Club. But starting to well would see the wrath of the Black Flag descend on any recalcitrant teams.

Earlier in the day, anyone walking the docks would have noted a growing mound of library books near the 5 entries of the National University of Singapore Sailing Team. Amongst the titles were such gems as "Sailing SB20s to Win", "Computational Fluid Dynamics" and "East Coast HDB Wind Shadows and Vortices". It soon became clear that Riji Wong's team of students, which included NUS' captain of boats, had been studying these titles in detail. Showing the fleet a clean pair of heels, *Walababy* notched up a score line of 2,1,1,1 in an impressive display of sailing. This score line was enough for the crew of 420 sailors and windsurfers to not only jump into first place, but to win the championship with a race to spare.

The overnight leader, Jovina Choo (*SSF5*), who counted amongst her team members Singapore 470 Olympic sailors, stitched together a credible score line with three third places out of 4 races. While *SSF5* slipped out of the lead, Jovina and team finished the regatta in a very strong second place. Having had consistently strong results through all three days, the team from *SSF 5*, were just a few points adrift of the title, but a whopping 17 points ahead of the pack that was engaged in the battle for the final podium place.

After the first two days of racing, with one drop in play, four teams were within four points of each other for third overall – *Sinbad* (34 points), *Rental Car* (35 points), *Pocapena* (38 points) and *The Sidewalk Café* (38 points). Another gaggle of teams sat a little further back - *Team NUS* (49 points), *Tara* (51 points) and *Zorro* (52 points). Having scored four bullets (but carrying some DNCs following gear failure) *CN Low's Xtra Mile 2* was also in the mix on 66 points. With 8 boats in the fight for the last spot on the podium, fireworks were guaranteed.

CN Low (Xtra Mile 2) came out swinging and scored what looked like a knock-out punch with scores of 1, 3 and 2 in races 9, 10 and 11. However, their disappointing 7th in race 12 would leave them guessing. *Bernie Chin (Pocapena)* had a very mixed bag with 11, 2, 12 and 4 – but would it be enough? *Daire O'Reilly* on *Sinbad* who had been third overnight showed consistent form with 7, 7, 6 and 5 but was not able to break through into the race placings. *La Petite Admiral (Tara)* showed some form (10, 8, 4, 2) but was penalised by the eagle-eyed on water umpires for further top mark infringements or perhaps for sporting red trousers with a green cravat and orange waistcoat. Meanwhile, the plucky Australian helm, *Steve Kennedy (The Sidewalk Café)* showed only glimpses of his first day performance (12, 11, 5, 10).

On the way back to the sophisticated 1^o15 Marina Club, the Singapore SB20 Fleet computer suffered a series of meltdowns as it calculated and re-calculated the final results adding in the drops. In a crime against sartorial elegance, the final place on the podium went to Agosto Sipos (*Tara*), a mere 1 point ahead of Daire O'Reilly (*Sinbad*). A clearly excited Agoston commented "That was the toughest third place result I ever had. I would like to dedicate this result to my excellent and unflappable crew".

As the prize giving meandered on in its own masked and safely distanced manner, all 24 teams spent time reflecting on the brilliant racing and warm hospitality of 1^o15 Marina Club they had enjoyed over the previous 4 days. Despite the lack of social activities as a result of the COVID safe management measures, the sailors had sailed in great winds and found an easy camaraderie with each other all the way from the first place boat to the last.

SB20 Singapore Class Chairman, Nick Cocks, closed the regatta with words of praise for all officials and organisers commenting "to bring together a regatta like this is a real team effort – thank you to all involved". He went on to say that "given the great success of this regatta, we look forward to being able to welcome all SB20 sailors from around the globe to the Singapore World Championships in February 2022". Details here: sb20worlds22.com

Final results here: <https://proregatta.com/events/137/>

1. Riji Wong, Walababy, 22 points
2. Jovina Choo, SSF 5, 32 points
3. Agoston Sipos, Tara, 49 points
4. Daire O'Reilly, SinBad, 50 points
5. CN Low, Xtra Mile 2, 53 points
6. Bernie Chin, Pocapena, 53 points
7. Mike Buchanan, Rental Car, 57 points
8. Steve Kennedy, The Sidewalk Café, 63 points
9. Jia Yi Loh, TeamNUS, 64 points
10. Nick Cocks, Zorro, 75 points

Jeremy Chase