



2021 SB20 Asian Grand Slam & Asia Pacific Championship

- Race Report 1 -

5 February 2021

For those who say there is no wind near the equator, we invite you to come to come and sail with us in the warm turquoise waters of Singapore during the North East monsoon season. The Singapore SB20 Fleet has enjoyed two days of breeze of the East Coast of Singapore. In bright sunshine, the SB20 crews have revelled in the 12-17kt sailing conditions off the golden sandy beaches of Bedok. For some the breeze has already been too much as spectacular broaches were seen in many of the races and one unfortunate crew had their mast depart over the side of their ship.

The excellent race officer efficiently set a 0.75nm beat with the top mark lying almost under the palm trees of Singapore's delightful East Coast Park – a hub for cycling, windsurfing and kite boarding enthusiasts. Today however, the crowd on the shoreline had the joyful pleasure of watching Mike Buchanan (*Rental car*) lead the fleet around the top mark in the first three races of the day. Being so close to the shore line made the racing challenging. There were pots of gold lying in wait for those able to navigate the shifty swirling breeze while other teams found only pits of despair.

Race 1 was commenced at the scheduled hour of 12 noon and the fleet of 24 boats (sadly one less due to the broken mast on practice day) leapt out of the starting blocks. After a tricky first beat and a run where it paid to be planing in the puffs, the order eventually shook out with Jovina Choo (*SSF 5*) leading home Riji Wong (*Walababy*) and Bernie Chin (*Pocapena*).

With a schedule of 4 races, the race officer wasted no time in banging away the start for Race 2. As the right side of the track started to dominate the beat, Mike Buchanan (*Rental car*) led the way to the top mark again. However he slid back down the pack as Agoston Sipos (*Tara*) sped through the fleet downwind registering a top speed of over 15knots to bag the win. Jovina Choo (*SSF 5*) and Bernie Chin (*Walababy*) rounded out the podium.

By Race 3, all of the teams had worked out that although the sandy beaches of Singapore looked pleasant, they offered nothing but treacherous wind shifts. Consequently, the entire fleet followed Mike Buchanan (*Rental Car*) to the right side of the track. As many an armchair pundit may have predicted, the first top mark rounding was more tightly packed than my grandmother's suitcase on the cruise to nowhere. Having inflicted a penalty on *SSF 5*, Agoston Sipos' *Tara* managed to magnificently snag the top mark (for the second time in three races) and tack onto port in front of the entire fleet earning him a penalty from the judicious on water umpires. As the mayhem unfolded, much to the delight of the crowd on the shore, *Rental car* was finally able to convert a lead into a win. Steve Kennedy (*The Sidewalk Café*) pulled a second out of the hat and fleet newcomer Daire O'Reilly (*Sinbad*) snagged a solid third ahead of a close chasing pack of 5 boats.

The breeze piped in for Race 4 which resulted in another casualty as Agoston Sipos (*Tara*) broke a spreader bracket and retired. This meant that the fleet could enjoy unimpeded top mark roundings and the large fleet of spectator boats were treated to some excellent hoists of the colourful

spinnakers. CN Low (*Xtra Mile 2*) came from nowhere in the first 3 races to win the last race of the day. He was closely followed by Berne Chin (*Pocapena*) and Riji Wong (*Walababy*).

As the tired crews started the down wind blast back to the sumptuous 1^o15 Marina Club, the SB20 Fleet computer went into overdrive to crank through the permutations and combinations. Finally as the scores were added up, Jovia Choo (*SSF 5*) (12 points) leads Bernie Chin (*Pocapena*) (15 points) and Steve Kennedy (*The Sidewalk Café*) (18 points). Waiting in the wings to pounce on any slip ups by the leaders tomorrow are Riji Wong (*Walababy*) (19 points), Mike Buchanan (*Rental car*) (21 points) and Daire O'Reilly (*Sinbad*) (22 points). What is clear is that the standard of the fleet from top to bottom has improved significantly in the last 12 months (more time on the water and less time travelling) and we have a regatta on our hands.

When approached after racing for a comment on his third place in the standings after Day 1, Steve Kennedy (*The Sidewalk Café*) lowered his beer mug and uttered a single word – “Strewth”. Fleet Treasurer, Robert Jessing (*Katana*) offered a less Australian (although less pithy) response commenting that “It was a challenging and fun day for all. The 1^o15 Marina Club staff and race organisers have been great and the safe distancing and COVID management seems to be working very well.”

The crews will return and do it all again tomorrow. Race Start is at 12 noon.

Jeremy Chase

