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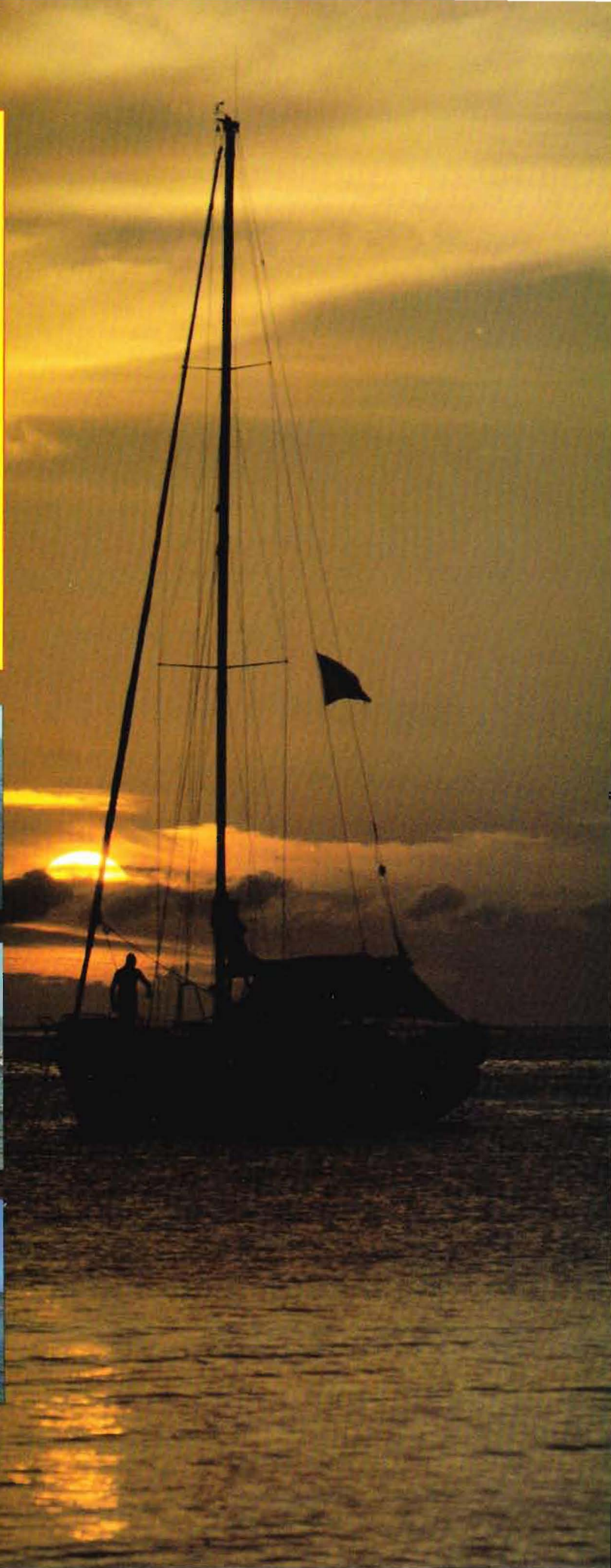
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14 Worlds

Annie Gardner Nelson

CLUB MET- CALFE



ANNUAL HOBIE 14 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SURFACES IN NEW CALEDONIA

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY RICHARD BLOUNT

With the 10th Annual Hobie 14 World Championship just completed in the dazzling South Pacific island of Noumea, New Caledonia, some things are very clear. To take home the first-place title, one had to be a master in 0-5 knots, 10-15 knots, 20-30 knots and 30-plus knots of trade wind energy. If that wasn't enough, one had to deal with a current that would make San Francisco Bay seem like a pond.

For those of you who aren't quite sure where New Caledonia is, let me offer you this. It is 1859 kilometers above New Zealand, 1978 kilometers east of Australia, and 1260 miles west of the Fiji Islands. In other words, it's situated between 18 and 22 degrees south 163 and 168 longitude east. New Caledonia has a surface area of 19,000 square kilometers. It is surrounded by 800 kilometers of barrier reef enclosing one of the most beautiful lagoons in the world. It's also where "McHale's Navy" of TV fame was based.

From around the world came 74 hopeful men and women sailors to race in the very first World Championship ever held in New Caledonia. So overwhelming and complete was the support of the French, the government even produced a commemorative postage stamp.

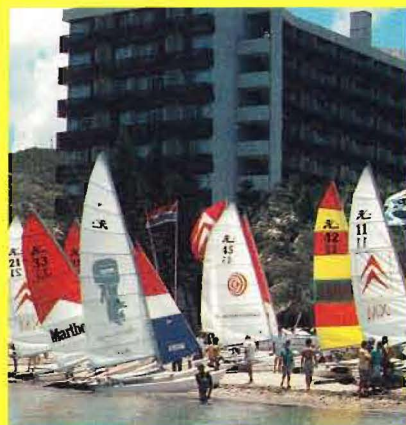
SAILORS GET ROYAL TREATMENT

The host hotel for the event was the world-famous Chateau Royal, better known as Club Med. The chateau is a seven-story giant, perfectly located for the racers, at water's edge.

If Hobie racing was not your cup of New Caledonia tea, you could indulge in tennis, jogging (among topless sunbathers), squash, aerobics, swimming, archery, yoga, snorkeling, windsurfing, sailing lessons, arts and crafts, theater, disco, and last but not least, food and drink. By the way, everything listed was free! That's right, it was included with the room.

Three great meals were prepared every day for us. Food was served in a commu-

nal buffet-style with no limit on quantity for food, wine or beer. If you desired more privacy, you could visit a special restaurant where you dined at individual tables and ordered from a menu. That was free, too. Most of us preferred buffet-style because the tables were large enough for ten, enabling us to meet fellow sailors as well as other hotel guests.



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For those of you who have had a difficult time previously getting past the qualifying rounds, you should have been here, with the 32 sailors attempting to qualify. Jacques Frei and Burkhard Toeblmann, the race organizers, allowed 30 eager men and women sailors into the main event.

One unique sailor who made the cut was only 17 years old: Nanu Merlo, a native New Caledonian. She weighs about 90 pounds. Her crew, and/or ballast, was Gaëla Piriou. They were a great sailing team. In fact, during the qualifying rounds Nanu was sailing red hot, despite a wind blowing 25 knots.

(For those regulatory buffs in the crowd, look up the rule regarding weight on a Hobie 14. It states that if over 50 pounds

are added, a crew is allowed to replace the ballast as weight. If that's the case, can that crew adjust the downhull, pull in the traveler car or in any other way help sail the boat? If not, why is the person called crew? If so, is that fair to sailors sailing by themselves? I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts.)

METCALFE RUNS AWAY WITH TITLE

Chris Metcalfe from Runaway Bay, Old Australia, won the Hobie 14 World Championship going away. To say he was the class of the field isn't quite enough. Of the ten races he sailed, his worst was a 4. The unusual occurrence (really non-occurrence) was he never won a single race in the series. He had four second-place finishes, five thirds and one fourth. Keep in mind each race had 36 world-class sailors on identical factory boats in constantly changing sailing conditions.

Team Metcalfe seems to have a stranglehold on Hobie world titles. Michael Metcalfe is the present Hobie 17 World Champion and brother Gary is the current Hobie 16 and 18 World Champion. The driving force behind the successful trio is a very motivated and dedicated father, Keith Metcalfe.

Not only do the Metcalfes rival Dennis Conner for number of days on the water; they also own two each of most sailboats they race, including Hobie 14s through 18s. Can you imagine their driveway?

Part of their winning strategy is continuous match racing. One can't adequately practice match racing without a trial horse. Their system is one Metcalfe on one Hobie 16 with another Metcalfe on an identical boat. Then, one by one they change sailors and adjust every allowable adjustment in all types of wind conditions. The changes are recorded on videotape to be reviewed and studied. Repeating this elaborate process over and over pays in huge dividends on every boat and every race.

Not only do the Metcalfes practice tuning boats in 20 minutes or less (the standard time allotted between races at Nationals and Worlds), they always have their boats dialed in to provide the most speed possible under the given conditions.

Another contributing factor to the Team Metcalfe success was exemplified at the Hobie 14 World Championship in New Caledonia. When Chris's boat hit the beach between races he was greeted by his support team. Not only do his cohorts drag the boat up the beach for him, remove his bridle fly and tiller; they serve him a hot meal on the spot, remove his waterlogged wetsuit and replace it with a

dry one. That's not all, his next assigned boat is stripped down by his support team, all previous telltale signs are removed, the sail is dropped, the battens are unstuffed, the boat is drained and the trampoline is tightened. All is done so Chris can step right up to the boat, tune it as he sees fit and not have to rush around. This ritual is repeated in every single race. Does it win you world titles? As with chicken soup, it can't hurt.

The only question still unanswered is which Metcalfe will win the next world or Olympic title. The family goal is a gold medal in the 1992 Spain Olympiad.

THE OTHER NINE

The top ten at the Hobie Worlds was spread around the globe. Included were Australians, South Africans, Tahitians, West Germans and an American. The results seem to favor the South Africans and Tahitians when it blew.

Kitty Salmon of Tahiti was sailing as if he owned the water. He was in first position going into the final two days of racing, with 7-1/2 points. Right behind him was family teammate Nino Salmon with 7-3/4 points. When the wind blew, they were always near the top at the weather mark.

As much good fortune as Kitty had early on, it turned to bad luck in the final rounds. In succession, he was over early, placed a disappointing 13, and hit the A mark and didn't perform his required two 360s. In one frustrating day, he added 71 points to his score.

The South Africans, led by the defending champion Allen Lawrence, sailed a great series. The rough waters of New Caledonia obviously must have been similar to conditions in South Africa as well as Tahiti. As a result, they sailed with tremendous confidence.

Lawrence was proving to everyone that his previous title was no accident. Regrettably, he ran into some poor luck during the fifth race. In light air, he crossed the finish line from the port end in fourth position. While he was trying to tack onto starboard to head back to the beach, a Race Committee member witnessed Lawrence hitting the finish buoy. As a result, RC protested Lawrence.

As a member of that protest committee, I can disclose that a heated discussion about the incident ensued. The committee member (a world-class sailor in his own right) was dead certain contact was made while the South African was dead certain contact was not made. A witness brought in by Lawrence claimed no contact by the burdened boat, but was found to be at least nine boat lengths away. After three hours of debate with yours truly backing

Lawrence's position, another witness was uncovered. Kai Kroger of West Germany finished fifth in that race and sailed right over the top of Lawrence's boat after the



HOBIE 14 WORLDS FINAL SERIES RESULTS

Name	Country	Points
1. Chris Metcalfe	Australia	23.00
2. Hiro Demaeyer	Tahiti	30.50
3. Allen Lawrence	Africa	31.50
4. Philippe Hars	Tahiti	45.75
5. Nino Salmon	Tahiti	51.50
6. Kai Kroger	W. Germany	57.75
7. Robert Edwards	S. Africa	58.50
8. Lawrence Edwards	S. Africa	63.00
9. Hobie Alter, Jr.	USA	82.50
10. Kitty Salmon	Tahiti	91.50
11. J. J. Francois	Tahiti	94.00
12. J. Claude Agnieray	Tahiti	101.00
13. Ren Brand	S. Africa	109.00
14. Michel Le Calvic	Tahiti	109.00
15. Darren Bundock	Australia	112.00
16. Garth Loudon	S. Africa	122.00
17. Michael Butler	Australia	123.00
18. Vladimir Revay	New Caledonia	124.00
19. Francis Petras	Tahiti	131.00
20. Jacques Frel	New Caledonia	136.00
21. Steve Fields	Australia	138.00
22. Warwick Fatches	Australia	141.00
23. Olivier Bachet	New Caledonia	151.00
24. Eric Chantreux	New Caledonia	155.00
25. Arnold Marais	New Caledonia	161.00
26. Dierk Reinhardt	W. Germany	164.00
27. Manu Sanuy	New Caledonia	165.00
28. Clive Kennedy	Australia	166.00
29. Burkhard Toebelemann	New Caledonia	168.00
30. Richard Johnston	New Caledonia	173.00
31. Gavin Luxton	Australia	185.00
32. Christian Deschamps	New Caledonia	186.75
33. Richard Perrin	New Caledonia	193.00
34. Rod Jordan	Australia	201.00
35. Robert Branch	Australia	205.00
36. Stan Woodruff	USA	209.00

finish, yielding a perfect view of the situation. Kroger testified that contact was made.

As a result of the decision, Lawrence's fourth-place score was replaced with a 35. His previous throwout was a ninth that was hard to overcome. If that incident had not happened, the defending champion

would have been two points behind Metcalfe going into the final race. Let this be a lesson to those of you die-hard port finishers: tacking too close to a finishing mark can have a very high price.

AND THEN THERE WERE EIGHT

The lighter air races were up for grabs. Playing the current correctly was almost as important as the wind direction, a point quite evident in one drifting race.

Bruce Fields of the United States was leading a race at the windward and leeward marks on an A-C-A-C-F course. Why did he finish a disappointing tenth? He didn't play the current as well as others.

The savior of the American delegation was none other than Hobie Alter Jr., winner of more national titles than anyone else in the country. Of all the great Hobie 14 sailors this country has produced, it's a shame only Hobie Jr. remained to carry the 14 team, for he had not raced a Hobie 14 since the 1985 Worlds in Puerto Rico. The rust showed. He suffered through a couple of poor races early on, but came on strong down the stretch. Once Hobie mastered the very difficult, yet faster one-rudder-up-to-windward system with the windward rudder on a 14, he sailed with the best of them. Hobie won two heavy air races and flipped while leading in another. Too bad his schedule doesn't allow him the opportunity to practice as much as his rivals; he sure can make his boats go fast.

AFTER-RACE DELIGHTS

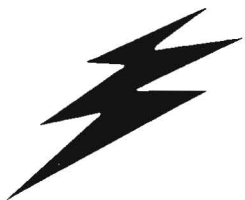
The race course wasn't the only place to find action. With bars staying open till 4:00 AM, we found there were lots of ways to get into trouble! One great spot was the "Metro." As modern as any decent bar in the states, it boasted an outdoor entrance, cozy atmosphere, dance floor, lovely French women, light show and very LOUD rock and roll music. Of course, 4:00 AM does come quickly under circumstances such as these. I didn't close any of the bars myself; I am relying on information provided by a reliable source (who will remain anonymous).

Once the racing was concluded, my responsibilities with judging, race results, boat assignment sheets and protest committees were over. I finally could sample a few of the Club Med toys and experience some of the great countryside.

I joined Team USA members Bruce Fields, Chuck Watson, Stan Woodruff and his sweet wife, Sharon, on a chartered sailboat called the Pepsi. The Pepsi, complete with a skipper, cook and a giant supply of Mai Tais, gave us an opportu-

Continued on page 60

DANGER



Extreme caution must be observed when launching and sailing near overhead wires. A mast near a wire could be fatal!

DANGER

nity to explore the outer islands.

To give you an idea of the food, our first meal was a three-foot tazard fish similar in looks to a yellowtail. We knew it was fresh because the skipper had caught it enroute to our first night's stay only two hours before. Each meal was full service with course upon course of food served in the French tradition accompanied by several bottles of French wine. No wonder all the world loves Paris!

Our first night brought us to an island about 25 miles offshore. Amedee Island was your basic glamorized lighthouse and tourist attraction. The French built the lighthouse in the 1870s and shipped it all the way to Amedee, where it still stands. An Amedee Island Yacht Club sweatshirt at the souvenir stand was only \$50.00.

My traveling companions and I were treated like royalty. Over the course of the cruise, we visited Atire, Redika and Maitre Islands, all uninhabited. The beaches are stained bone white from the endless white coral reefs that surround New Caledonia. Shrubs, palm trees and other plant life lend a dark green cover to the islands. As

child had run amuck with an underwater paintbrush.

Exploring the primitive islands was a real treat. At high tide the ocean surge would remove any footprints in the sand, so as you approached the beach from the shore boat, you felt as if you were the very first person ever to set foot on the island.

We found Nautilus shells, clam shells, white coral, coral snakes, bats, osprey and many other unique birds, animals and other interesting things indigenous to the area. For the most part, the wildlife seemed unconcerned about the new population explosion on their homes.

CALEDONIA OR BUST


I sincerely hope that sometime in your life you have the time, money and inclination to treat yourself to one of these island-hopping charters. Time will stand still for you. For me, the relaxation and appreciation for the outdoors is so extraordinary, everything else I have ever done seems petty.

Let this be a lesson to those of you die-hard port finishers: tacking too close to a finishing mark can have a very high price.

you can well imagine, the white beaches surrounding the flat terrain made for great photos.

The water temperature was 80 degrees. The daytime air temperature of 95 degrees dropped only to 85 degrees at night. We were there a full two months before the full effect of the strong summer trade winds would be felt.

We snorkeled among the prettiest fish ever created; literally dozens of unique species of fish abounded. The fish were a mad mix of vivid color, as if a creative

Isn't it about time you made a commitment to yourself to see some of the great sights of the world with your own eyes? Don't you think you are worth some pampering? You can do it via a major Hobie event. Next year's World Championships are slated for Canada and Brazil. North of the border, south of the border; both places will do wonders for whatever state your mind is in. Plan now to see the world and the Worlds. I'll be looking for you! 

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