

My IODA African Championship in Hammamet, Tunisia

I was part of the South African Optimist Sailing Team that took part in the IODA African Championships in Hammamet, Tunisia from 1 to 9 October 2011. The other team members were Henry Daniels, David Wilson, Dylan Long and Arin Long. Our coach was Ricky Robinson. We all received cool outfits and Quantum sponsored some nice sail bags.

We left SA on 27 September to have a few extra days to do some training and get used to the sailing conditions in Hammamet. Two French sailors from Reunion had the same idea and we made friends and practised together for 2 days before the regatta. Ricky was serious about getting us fit and every morning until the end of the regatta we had to get up early to swim laps and play water polo in the hotel pool.

On Saturday 1 October it was time for measurement and registration. At the opening we had a parade, flag hoisting and I represented Team RSA in the “mixing of the waters”. Other teams were from Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria and Reunion. There were 33 sailors in the fleet. We had a party aboard a pirate themed ship with live music.



Sunday saw the first racing with the tune-up race. There was a fairly strong wind of about 10 knots. We did not have currents, but the water was quite choppy. The water in Tunisia was incredibly warm! Ricky and the Egyptian coach shared a coaching boat.



At last – time for racing on Monday. We finished 3 races in conditions similar to Sunday. It was just a little more switchy. South Africans did fairly well, with David Wilson consistently coming 1st. The rest of us managed to stay in the top half of the fleet. Tuesday had lighter wind and we sailed 2 more races. On Wednesday it was time for the team racing. It was done in a round robin format and a lot of races were sailed. It was very exciting and competition was tough. The winning team was Algeria, with Tunisia 2nd and RSA 3rd.

On Thursday it was lay-day. We travelled in an air-conditioned bus and took in some sights. We had lunch and did some shopping as well. The coolest thing we saw was an old colosseum where the gladiators used to fight long ago.

Friday it was back to fleet racing. We had some catching up to do so 4 races were sailed. There were terrible wind switches and gusts. These benefited some sailors like me who had my best result of the regatta at 9th, but our RSA leader David Wilson lost his 1st place. On Saturday we sailed the final 3 races with a heavy pin bias at the start. David sailed very hard, but was covered by the top Algerian sailor who managed to out sail David.

Final results were David Wilson 2nd, Henry Daniels 4th, Dylan Long 9th, Dominic 15th and Arin Long 16th, as well as a bronze medal for Team RSA for the team racing. Ricky was proud of the team and said that the northern African sailors are very good and it was a great result for all our sailors to have finished in the top half of the fleet.



Every day after sailing we stopped at an ice-cream shop where we had 2 or 3 scoops of lots of nice flavours ice-cream. At the hotel we spent most of the time in the pool.

On Sunday we returned home. Even that was exciting because I got to fly in the huge Airbus A380 which can take up to 800 people.



I want to thank LDYC who helped me with generous financial support that helped make this great experience possible. THANK YOU!!!!!!

Report by Dominic van der Walt