



## 2008 Finn Open and Junior European Championship Club Nautico Scarlino, Italy May 2-10

### First race goes to Ainslie

After a three hour delay to wait for the wind to arrive, the 2008 Finn Open and Junior Championship got underway in Scarlino, Italy with a single race in 6-8 knots of patchy breeze. Ben Ainslie (GBR) made his intentions quite clear, with a clean race win, after leading at each and every mark. Piotr Kula (POL) was the best of the juniors finishing in 11<sup>th</sup> place.

Following last night's spectacular opening ceremony and yesterday's fantastic weather it was with some disappointment that sailors arrived at the Club Nautico Scarlino this morning to find intermittent showers, and very little wind. However by 13.00 the rain had started to dry up and by 14.00 the sun was trying to break through the low cloud and a light breeze was starting to develop. The fleet was sent afloat at 14.15 for a single race at 15.30. A double windward/leeward course was set.

Conditions were quite trying for some with a flat sea and a light wind that tended to reward the middle left. On the first beat a large difference in pressure across the course left those on the right stranded and brought the left to the front. However, right in the middle of the pressure in the middle left was Ben Ainslie (GBR). After a clear start near the favoured pin end he led round the first mark by 50 metres from Guillaume Florent (FRA), Piotr Kula (POL), Ismael Bruno (FRA) and Jonas Høgh-Christensen (DEN).

On the first downwind, the majority of the fleet favoured the right with little chance of any comebacks. Ainslie extended his lead to nearly a minute at the first leeward gate, and there was very little place changing behind him. During the second upwind, Ainslie played the middle ground again, taking little gains with each tack. At the top mark he had extended his lead to one minute 20 seconds. Florent maintained his second place, but behind him Daniel Birgmark (SWE) had moved from around 20<sup>th</sup> at the first mark to 11<sup>th</sup> at the gate to third place at the second windward mark. Also making a sizable gain was Ivan Kljakovic Gaspic (CRO) who went from 9<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> on the second upwind.

The last downwind produce few changes as by now the fleet was quite well spread out. Ainslie gradually extended his lead to win by nearly two minutes from Florent and Birgmark. These three were followed across the finish in the dying wind by Kljakovic Gaspic, Høgh-Christensen and Italy's 1992 Olympic representative, Emanuele Vaccari (ITA), making a comeback for this regatta.

After the race, Vaccari, who finished 14<sup>th</sup> in the 1992 Olympic Regatta said, "This was the kind of race where even the amateurs can have their say because of the light winds. It was great for me to come back into the world of international sailing and kick it off with this kind of a race. It truly



made me happy and I'm ecstatic. I stopped sailing in 1996 and I think I can definitely say that I've had my moment of glory here, although I hope to keep on sailing this way.”

Ainslie commented, “It was great to finally get a race after the light winds. It was actually a very difficult race with the breeze shifting about and a long one at that. I managed to pick the right side of the course and kept the lead throughout the race. Having been here for a few days, I know this is not the typical weather conditions for here, so we are hoping for a stronger breeze to return in the days to come.”

Last year's Junior European bronze medalist Piotr Kula (POL) had a great race rounding the first mark in third but finally dropping to 11<sup>th</sup> at the finish. The junior sailors here are expected to fight as hard for the Junior title as the seniors are for their event, and it is always encouraging to see juniors challenging for the front of the fleet. Second placed Junior today was Tomas Hrnkal (CZE) in 29<sup>th</sup> and third placed was Viacheslav Sivenkov (RUS) in 30<sup>th</sup>.

Two races are scheduled for tomorrow, Tuesday, and the forecast is for the 10-15 knots breeze that welcomed the sailors to Scarlino and the Gulf of Follonica, Maremma to return. Many are hoping that it does.

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Event website: [www.eurofinn2008.it](http://www.eurofinn2008.it)

Class website: [www.finnclass.org](http://www.finnclass.org)

For high resolution photos and video contact Tessa Wiechmann at [ufficiostampa@clubnauticoscarlino.com](mailto:ufficiostampa@clubnauticoscarlino.com)

Sailing lovers can follow all racing by logging onto [www.sailrev.tv](http://www.sailrev.tv).

At the end of every day results and photos will be posted on the event's website [www.eurofinn2008.it](http://www.eurofinn2008.it)