



HUGHESPATERSON 470 TEAM

*470 European Championships
Lake Traunsee, Austria
(6-14th June 2009)*

The 470 European Championships were programmed as a 13 race drop 1 series with a double point medal race for the top 10 crews. But with the weather conditions experienced on Lake Traunsee, it would prove difficult to even get a series. Lake Traunsee is a small lake (approx 5km long by 1km wide) nestled between the 2000m high Mountains in Eastern Austria.

We arrived in Traunsee 4 days before the event, after with a short tour through Germany on our way down from Medemblik. The drive was quite frustrating with our boats on trailer restricting us to 100km/hr on the open speed Autobahns; the Audi definitely wanted to go faster!

We trained for 3 days with Victor and the rest of the Australian team before a day off to rest up and start the regatta. We experienced all types of conditions in our training period with 2 sessions a day (first one 8am – 11am and second session 1pm – 3pm). The water was always quite flat and winds gusty, the general pattern was to have a light gradient morning breeze from the south then as the day heated up it would die and allow a light thermal northerly to grow in the afternoon.

The training also allowed us to try a few things out with our rig setup from our learnings in Medemblik and found we could carry much more rig tension giving us more margin for adjustment in pin selection.

Measurement caused a few headaches for many people, we finally got through after having to add 700g to our mast and shaving the ends off our kite pole to get that down to max length (always a fun day).

We started the first day of racing in the afternoon thermal northerly breeze with some encouraging steps forward from Delta Lloyd Regatta. We got ourselves into some good positions picking the wind and pressure coming down the lake on the up and down winds. We finished the day with a 16th, 27th (after ripping our brand new spinnaker) and 13th. Starting still proved an issue for us but we found it much easier to get clear and work the shifts to get back in the race rather than it being just a speed game. After the first day we sat 30th on the leader board with the gold fleet cut off being 41st.

From here the regatta became quite interesting for everyone. We all got used to the postponed flag both on shore and on the water. We spent the second day on shore in delay for a couple of hours before we were sent out to try for racing. We ended up getting a start and the 2 inner loops done of our trapezoid (3 legs to go) in 5-15knot winds when the breeze glassed before we could get back to the top mark. We were sitting once again in the top 15 playing well in the shifty conditions.

After getting a tow back to the starting area the breeze finally filled in from the north once again and we re-started in about 3-5 knots. Once again we were sitting in the top 15-20 boats after 1.5 inner loops when the breeze glassed out again. This time however the committee decided to shorten the course at the bottom mark allowing the leaders to just finish in the last remaining breeze. Our pack of boats had gone left down the run and sat in no breeze sailing into the current while others behind us found tiny puffs of wind from the mountain and floated / rocked through underneath us to get a finish. We failed to make the time limit scoring one DNF for the whole day out of our 6 hours on the water. We were pretty amazed the race counted but still pretty shattered at the result. There was apparently a lot to say at the coaches meeting the following morning!!

The next day was a similar story, postponed on shore, then postponed on the water until finally getting one race away for the day. We found ourselves in the middle of this light race to often on both the up and downwinds especially when the lake glassed out again on the last lap. We finished a disappointing 32nd after sailing much of the race around the mid 20s. We were slightly buoyed on by the fact the silver medalist from both Athens and Beijing finished behind us and was only a handful of points above us on a leader board. After these 2 races we had now fallen to 64th overall and needing a top 10 result to make it into the Gold fleet.

In a surprise for Traunsee we arrived to racing on the 4th day to a strong (and freezing cold) southerly wind. We started on time for the first time in the regatta in winds gusting from 10-25knots. After a good 1st upwind we rounded in 7th place and extended well for the first part of the downwind. We then got a shift and gybed through on the pressure with many of our front pack to the left on the run. Then the boats that continued got a 30 degree left hander and an extra 10 knots and came reaching into the bottom gate marks. We lost about 25 boats!! We recovered back to finish the race in 18th but were disappointed about our opportunity to cement a top 10 result and possibly push for the gold fleet from where we were.

The next two days were very unproductive for us in the silver fleet. We sat on the water for 4 hours the first day and 5 on the second without even getting a start sequence. The breeze went from 15-20knots to glass in an instant as storm clouds came over the lake. The problem however was the direction was never consistent enough to set a course and get a fair race in. They tried several times for the gold fleet, and abandoned many times.

Due to this lack of racing the committee posted a change to the schedule with first start at 7am down at the southern end of the lake requiring a 6am launch and tow. This proved to be a good decision in the end as although freezing cold we had the most consistent wind since the first day of the regatta. We started our race in about 10 knots of breeze and after a poor start once again and a moderate upwind to round the top in about 35th we recovered on the downwind to 15th at the bottom gate marks. We played the shifts well for the next lap and got into 8th at the final wing mark when the breeze glassed out once again. We had travelled too far on the bottom reach toward the pin mark and had to beat upwind into the current to finish. We fell back to 12th in the race.

We then got towed all of the way back to the club at the other end of the lake to wait and see if the breeze would fill back in for more racing. We then waited on shore from 9am till finally being abandoned at 3:30pm and the regatta was over.

We finished the regatta in place 11th in Silver fleet which equated to 52nd overall out of the 82 strong field. The other Australian boats had mixed regattas, with Mat Belcher and Malcolm Page finishing 5th, Sam Kivell & Will Ryan finished 38th, Alexander & Patrick Conway finishing 75th and Stacey Omay & Chelsea Hall finished 22nd in the women's fleet.

Overall we were disappointed at our final result but felt we sailed really well in the shifty conditions. Whenever there was wind on the lake you could see, we would generally do quite well and our speed was good. It was only the two races where the lake totally glassed out where we posted a DNF and a 32nd that cost us dearly on the scorecard. And in a one drop series you can't afford those!! The regatta itself was interesting; in the end we sailed 7 races in 7 days including 3 on the first day. There was a lot of sitting in the yacht club and on the water waiting for semi-constant breeze.

Our starting is still a concern however. Our positioning and maneuvering is still improving but our timing to accelerate and timing of blocking opponents seems to be our downfall. This is an area we can definitely work on in Kiel and will be a focus in the training when we get there.

From now we drive to Kiel in Germany to train for 2 days then a day off with racing starting on the 20th of June. Thanks to everyone for their support back home.

Thankyou to everyone for their support from back home; check out our website for further info and updates.

www.topshelfmarine.com.au/hughespaterson

Shane & Felix.



The View From Union Yacht Club, Lake Traunsee.



8am Training Sessions on Lake Traunsee – 10 degrees and limited breeze.



Leaving the Yacht Club on a Sunny Afternoon Training Session.



Our Rig on the Road.