

Winning the Team Racing Worlds

by Tyler Sinks, USA 1 team captain

The ISAF Team Racing World Championship were held in Rutland, UK. Our team was invited to compete in this year's event following our win at the U.S. Team Racing National Championship (George Hinman Trophy) held in Marblehead, MA, last September.

Sailing for our team this year was Michael Menninger, Haley Kirk, Justin Law, Adrienne Kamilar and Lucy Wallace. Every member of our team was either a College All-American, or a U.S. Team Racing National Champion.

The regatta was sailed in Fireflies, England's version of the two-person CFJ dinghy. We were fortunate to have great sailing conditions throughout the week, with winds ranging from 10-20 knots and temperatures in the high 60's (a nice summer day in the UK). By the end of the week, the race committee has completed over 450 races. Hats off to the Rutland Waters Racing Staff... they did a tremendous job.

With 18 teams representing 9 countries, the stage was set for the championship. Our team came out of the gates strong, winning the first two round robins and securing a place in the gold round. We continued our consistency in the gold round, losing only one race to the defending world champions from the England. The top four teams from the gold round advanced to a final four knock-out round, which saw the top seeded British Team (GBR 1), take on the fourth seed, USA 3. That left our team taking on GBR 2.

Our philosophy is different than most teams - we rely a lot on boat speed, and use team racing maneuvers only when situations required us to. It's very easy to get caught up in boat-on-boat combat and lose sight of the bigger picture. In the semifinal round, we knew GBR 2 would try to over team race, so we adjusted our strategy accordingly. We focused on good starts, sailing the lifted tacks, and balancing our pairs on the headed tack (balancing is when you slow the opponent down in order to help your teammate sail ahead). Our strategy worked well and we ended up sweeping GBR 2 3-0, to advance to the finals.

As it turned out, the other semifinal match ended up being a dogfight. USA 3 was down 0-2 to the defending world champions, GBR1. With the Americans up against the wall, they rallied and took the series 3-2, a crushing defeat for the hometown favorite and defending world champs. For the first time since 2011, the World Championship would be coming back to the U.S.

In the finals, we continued our "boat-speed" approach, consistently beating USA 3 off the line and extending our lead from there. All week we focused on continuing to improve throughout the event, knowing that peaking at the right time was critical to our team's success. With good starts and even better boat speed, our team prevailed over USA 3, taking the series 3-0, and claiming the 2015 ISAF Team Racing World Championship.

Additional details [here](#).