

One Keeper and One to Forget

Qingdao, China - August 9, 2008 - We hope you enjoyed the fantastic Olympic Games opening ceremony in Beijing. If you looked for us in the parade of athletes and didn't see us, it's because Team 7 wasn't there. We watched it on television like you. Most of the US Team flew to Beijing on

a special charter flight but our first race was the next day and we made the logical, but hard call to maintain our normal routine and stay here in Qingdao, ready for an early start.

The day before the first race was our only day off since getting here. We had four 12-hour days working with the US Sailing support team, prepping our boat for competition before we started practicing. The days have flown by with lots of new distractions like the special Olympic boat and sail graphics, measurement details, media interviews and all the buzz leading up to the big day. It really helped that US Sailing arranged for two air conditioned containers for workshops and boat prep, providing us with a respite from the heat and humidity.

We raced today on Course A, just outside the harbor, watched by a fleet of spectator boats that included 29 official media boats crowded with TV teams and still photographers. The breeze was incredibly light and fluky, around six knots, but made even more shifty by the proximity of the course to the thermals generated by the concrete jungle ashore. Complicating things further, there was a strong tidal current sweeping up the course, with the wind. Oh yes, there was the official TV helicopter too. Very noisy and distracting, which meant we had to work a little harder to keep our focus.

We had a great start to the first race and chose a perfect time on the first beat, about two thirds of the way up the leg, to tack to the left, even though we had to duck a few boats. Coming into the mark from the left side we looked really good and we were very happy with our tactics and positioning at this point. We rounded fifth but the current was carrying boats up to the mark and holding back those that had rounded, so things got pretty chaotic. Nevertheless, we kept our fifth position around the mark and then set to work pulling back boats until we were second at the leeward mark, which was also halfway through the race.

We were pretty happy about the right-hand side of the course for the second beat but that was a bad call because after rounding we found ourselves on the outside of a large left-hand shift. The fleet inverted quite quickly and we went from a position where we were challenging the lead boat for first place, to rounding the last weather mark in tenth place and 1 minute 12 seconds behind the leader. The breaks went against us on the last run and we finished 14th, just one place out of last. This wasn't our finest hour.

In the second race we made another good start and stayed in pressure to round in second place just 16 seconds behind the Dutch boat. The fleet compressed up again but the Dutch boat got clear as we started the run while we had to avoid some boats coming upwind. From there we sailed a conservative race and protected our second place. This one was a nice keeper and a nice contrast to our pitfall-laden first race. Our 14-2 opening day record sees us in 9th place overall.

Tomorrow we're expecting more of the same weather, with another light easterly breeze, but this time on Course E, offshore where we can expect more consistency. Our families arrive tomorrow too, although we don't expect to see too much of them. However Qingdao is at its best to greet them, with blue skies, colourful graphics and banners everywhere and streets and buildings bathed in special lighting at night.

For the next three weeks the format of our reports is changing a little in order to comply with International Olympic Committee requirements for all athletes. The IOC wants to protect the commercial interests of its sponsors and thus we're not permitted to post photos of sailing action or provide you directly with official results. However, we have all the links to official photos, results, and other items of interest on our special Team 7 Qingdao Olympic Blog page. If you want to tell your friends and family about our reports, they can find them at <http://www.team7sailing.com/content/blogcategory/20/36/>.

For a really great photo of us in sailing in front of the British team, go to <http://www.sailing.org/olympics/news/24670.php>. Then click on the thumbnail shot.

For results go to <http://www.sailing.org/olympics/resultscentre.php> and click on Yingling Women in the left-hand column.

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for Team Seven Sailing -

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