

Gibraltar triumphs at the 2008 PricewaterhouseCoopers International Regatta

Started in 1987 as a sailing race between the Southampton and Windsor offices, the PricewaterhouseCoopers International Regatta is now an annual international event with PwC partners and staff from around Europe taking part.

The trophy, a winch mounted on a wooden block, was taken from the defeated Windsor yacht and presented by the Windsor office to the triumphant Southampton office, and became known as the "Windsor Winch".

This is only the fourth year that Gibraltar takes part in the regatta, and as such are relative novices when compared to London, Paris or Copenhagen all of whom first took part over ten years ago.

However, after very convincing win in 2007, the Gibraltar team were keen to show that their first ever win had not been just a fluke.

As in previous years, PricewaterhouseCoopers had reserved a fleet of 20 identical Jeanneau Sunfast 37s in Port Solent. The Gibraltar team arrived early in order to be able to get in a days training before the big race. Whilst many of the Gibraltar team have sailed before, they felt that they needed some practice time on the Sunfast 37s in order to familiarise themselves with this yacht.

Conditions in the infamous Solent were ideal for the Gibraltar team, with over 15 knots of wind, (gusting to 25 knots) blowing from the West and moderate seas, they did not have the heavy rains of the previous year to contend with.

As in previous years there were two races after setting off from Portsmouth on the Saturday.

The Gibraltar team were off to a reasonable start in the first race. The beat up to the first windward mark which lay three miles away was a long but exciting one as the Gibraltar yacht managed to out-sail its opponents on the starboard tack and once ahead tack onto port and cross in front of the entire fleet rounding the first windward mark in first place. Once the spinnaker was hoisted successfully the rest of the race became sailed "text book" style, with the Gibraltar team tacking on top of the yachts in second and third place, in order to maintain their lead. Finally, after a two and a half hour gruelling race, the Gibraltar team finished with a convincing ten minute lead over the second placed yacht.

By the second race the wind had dropped slightly, and conditions benefited the host nation. Nevertheless after a terrible start the Gibraltar team seemed to get their act together and saw them round the first windward mark in seventh place. Once again a successful hoisting of the spinnaker, coupled with some nifty sailing by the skipper saw them pick out the opposition one by one as they sailed on a broad reach in a north-easterly direction. By the time that they had reached the leeward mark they were caught in a battle against the London team to see who would round it in first place. Although the Gibraltar team had water round the mark and were able to take the lead, this was quickly lost as they were forced to tack in order to clear a riding turn on the winch which meant we were unable to release the genoa. Finding themselves in third place again, the Gibraltar team, learning that the race was to be shortened at the next windward mark, put all of their effort into sailing the yacht as best they could. The finish could not have been more exciting with the London team sailing up to the finish on a port tack they were forced to tack onto starboard by the Gibraltar team and eventually took the final gun a fraction of a second in front of the Gibraltar team.

Nevertheless the overall result was in Gibraltar's favour with a first and a second, beating London's results of a first and a third.

After the race we sailed to the Isle of Wight. The gala dinner and prize giving at Cowes Yacht Haven Event Centre was a great success, stories of the day's sailing were exchanged, the food was excellent and the Champagne flowed and a good time was had by all. Now Gibraltar adds its name, for a second time, to the famous Windsor Winch trophy alongside past winners which have included London, Guernsey, Paris, Copenhagen, Moscow, Manchester, Lisbon and of course Southampton and Windsor.

Team Photo



Back Row: Edgar Lavarello, Charles Lavarello (Skipper), Patrick Sheppard Capurro
Front Row: Ivan Perez, Colin Vaughan, Patrick Pilcher, Kristian Menez

Victorious PwC Gibraltar boat as it crosses the finish line

