

On Top of the Worlds

by Chris Hufstader



Millican, of the U.S., crosses Iida, of Japan, and proceeds to weather in one of the windier races of the 1985 Worlds.

Chris Hufstader is Editorial Assistant at *Yacht Racing & Cruising*. He has crewed with Ken Read since 1982 in major J/24 events worldwide. He graduated from Tufts University in 1983 where he was captain of the sailing team. He wrote the following article from notes taken at the 1985 Worlds in Japan held November 15-24, where he crewed along with Brad Dimeo, Bill Shore and Todd Berman for Ken Read on the winning boat, Maggie-San, especially named for the occasion.

Everyone who competed in the Seventh World Championship in Japan was awarded the opportunity to visit that beautiful country and sail in one of the most competitive one-design regattas available. Sailors at the Worlds experienced the gracious hospitality the Japanese are famous for, as well as a wide variety of sailing conditions. We sailed in cold and windy conditions, with 100 percent jibs and fast downwind planing, as well as extremely light and drifting conditions accompanied by massive windshifts. The regatta was run by the Nissan Corporation and the Japanese

J/24 Class without a hitch. The faultless Race Committee and administrative work was surpassed only by the social events; it seemed that they knew that we go to these regattas for the parties too.

The headquarters of the event was at the Nissan Marina Tokai, near the city of Gamagori, about two hours southwest of Tokyo via the speedy Bullet Train. The staff at the Marina was terribly helpful in assisting the competitors in preparing the chartered boats that most of us sailed, although when requesting parts and tools from the staff at the boatshop you never knew what they would give you. When

our foredeck man, Todd Berman, wanted to buy a long screw in the store, he was politely offered the use of a large and menacing saber-saw. Such transactions never ceased to be a great source of hilarity. All kidding aside, the staff at the marina literally bent over backward helping everyone get their boats ready for the championship, and it was all greatly appreciated.

I was fortunate enough to go sailing with Takao Ninomiya and part of his crew on his boat *Boomerang 5* the very first day I was there. It was a rare opportunity to sail with a Japanese crew and scout the racing area on Atsumi Bay with some of the local sailors while awaiting the arrival of the brand new Nissan-built boat that we had chartered for the regatta.

Many of the Japanese J/24 sailors feel that they compete at a slight disadvantage because of their crew size. It is very difficult to find big crew members that are experienced, so many of the Japanese teams at the Worlds were not hoping for a windy series. I had a good idea what it must be like when I sailed with Ninomiya, sailmaker Yoshio Shozaki, and Yoshitaka Yamaguchi in 20-25 knots that day. We sailed upwind overpowered slightly with the small jib up so we could record some compass headings and check sail trim, and then had a furious planing ride back to the marina. I now understood their envious glances toward the heavy hitters crewing on some of the other boats. At the time I thought that Atsumi Bay would be a fairly straightforward place to sail. It was big enough for the large fleet, there was not a lot of current in the area that we sailed in, and the prevailing breeze was fairly steady. I was completely wrong.

We all spent the next few days getting acquainted with the area on shore, working on boats and measuring in, and eating at seafood restaurants. All the boats were meticulously measured by Mr. Watanabe and his team of officials, and soon we were all out practicing on the windy bay. We tested out our new boat in some very big breezes, being very careful not to break anything major. A practice race was held in lighter air the day before the first race. Nobody was surprised by the amount of general recalls forced by the fleet, five in total. After several sequences with the Black Flag broken out, we got off to a start. All-Japan Champion Robert Fly started near the committee boat and tacked out to the right. He went all the way over toward the shore,



It was "weight out!" for the first race, sailed on a sunny, cold day in breezy conditions.

tacked, and rounded in first at the weather mark, thereby tipping off the fleet of at least one way of getting out in front. He eventually led around the course, then sailed in after the leeward mark, allowing Eddie Owen to win the practice race.

That race was the first time I had seen the Race Committee's innovative way of controlling the starting line. They positioned a third committee boat roughly in the middle of the line, and slightly upwind of it. The starting line was sighted from three different points, and they made a rule that, if you hit the middle boat, you had to go around one of the ends. This, combined with the Black Flag, helped keep things from getting too out of hand. Needless to say, this new twist produced a whole new lexicon for describing where to start on the line.

The night before the first race was the Opening Ceremony, complete with military band and a large cask of sake. We were all encouraged to sample this delicious beverage with the promise that it would bring good luck. I think that some of the sailors thought that the amount of luck received in this manner would increase exponentially with the volume of sake consumed, but I might be wrong. Just to be on the safe side, our team made sure to sample our fair share. It didn't seem to hurt any.

The first race was sailed on a sunny, cold day in breezy conditions. While it may have looked like Eddie Owen and his team on *Luder* had gotten a lot of luck

from the sake cask, luck had very little to do with their good start and fast speed. It was marginal 150 percent genoa conditions at first, but all but a few boats sailed with the 100. On Ken Read's boat, we had a hard time deciding and had a different headsail up on each beat, changing back and forth. Owen sailed a solid race, rounding the first mark behind I-116, steered by Paolo Semararo, who was eventually caught by the fast British team. It was very shifty, especially up near the windward mark where big puffs rolled off the hills and landed at various angles. The top ten places on the first race, like the second, were very tight amongst the more competitive U.S. teams at the regatta (see scores). These first two races were very similar in that the breeze was out of the same direction and strengthened as the day went on. Initially there were a lot of puffs and lulls, which put a premium on changing gears with the wind velocity. While many boats played the right side hard, success lay in getting a good angle to come back toward the mark with. This involved a lot of patience and the ability to find a good lane to sail in with clear air.

The second race was won by *Luder* again, in more wind and overcast skies. It was a lot steadier, and there were not as many holes to power through going upwind. Dave Curtis with his crew on *HJ* closely pursued Owen around the course to finish second in front of most of the same group in the top ten. After two races the regatta was fairly close, with Owen in

the lead five points ahead of Ed Baird. It was apparent that the team on *Luder* was going to be hard to stop if the conditions stayed the same as in the first two races.

The weather for the distance race was not the same as the first two races, however. It was very light, and the breeze died more and more as the fleet was general recalled again and again. By the time we got a start off, it was almost drifting conditions. We worked over to the right of the fleet where the last of the breeze was before it died completely. We were there when the wind came back from the right as well; at first it just landed in spots coming from abeam, prompting us to raise and lower the spinnaker and genoa several times. Looking around the fleet, I noticed that many of the boats were sailing with one or more crew down below. I can tell you from experience that this weight placement is very fast, but twice as boring for the unfortunate bilge dwellers. It is probably like racing a submarine, except there is no periscope. Todd and I took turns jumping out of the forward hatch to pull the sails up and down, and to take quick looks at the fleet.

When the wind filled in again, Jim Brady got it first, and we soon after. We raced a quarter of a mile to the windward mark and turned the corner, taking careful note of our competitors and where they were. The boats that were in the middle and the right on that first beat were in very bad shape, and several of the boats



Eddy Warden-Owen's Luder plays the waves downwind in a stiff breeze.

KOS PHOTO



Competing nations' flags fly at Nissan Marina Tokai.

in the top ten at that point were far back in the fleet, which gave us a big break. Owen managed to fight back to a 14th place finish, and Mahaney pulled out to an eighth, but Baird languished in the mid-20's. Dave Curtis' boat sailed in, I think because he had a couple of sick crew members on board. In fact, several sailors missed races due to food poisoning. I did not find this altogether surprising, since you never really knew what you were eating over there.

Brady loosely covered us on the following upwind leg, and managed to stretch his lead on us to the point that he looked quite comfortable out there in front. As we progressed down what turned out to be the last leg of the course (Race Committee shortened the course), it became obvious to us that we had a little better speed than Jim did. We started to position ourselves directly upwind of the finish so that we could work the jibing angles, since we noticed that there were still some subtle shifts in the wind that we

Photo by Hiroshi Wada

could use. We nailed a couple of shifts right on the money and got close to Brady, and we both starting jibing. About twenty minutes later he split from us and we converged a little while later just barely in front of the finish line, where we managed to cross him finally. Our victory in the third race tied us in points with Brady, and provided a major confidence builder for us. Our light-air speed seemed to be excellent both upwind and down, and we were sure that the breezy conditions were no problem either. The poor finishes of some of our competitors were inspiring, although we knew very well that the throw-out factor was only just coming into play.

That evening was another fantastic party, complete with a festive dancing parade with great percussion. There was abundant food of all sorts, as well as beer and hot saki. One zealous British team joined into the percussion section, accompanying them with some borrowed garbage can lids that they pounded on with bamboo sticks. They marched around with the Japanese dance troupe with their seaboots and foul weather jackets on. I am reasonably certain everyone had a fantastic time.

Following this event was the layday, which was sunny and warm with a light breeze. We went for a sail with some of our Japanese friends on a three-quarter tonner, and then spent the rest of the afternoon racing remote-controlled miniature 12-Meters in the marina basin. The winner of the small regatta held is still disputed amongst the participants, and we may never know who won.

What we all *really* wanted to know was who would win the J/24 Worlds, so the next day the fleet went out to sail another light-air contest. We led the race all the way around the first triangle, but lost two boats on the last leg when the wind did the disappearing act again. The breeze quit completely, as if someone hit a switch and just shut it down. It came back in from the right, where Geraldo Low-Beer in BL 735 was waiting. Nearby was Bob Johnstone, who was sailing with an all-Japanese crew who did a great job for him (despite the fact that they probably had a tough time with the language barrier). Bob swept in just ahead of us to

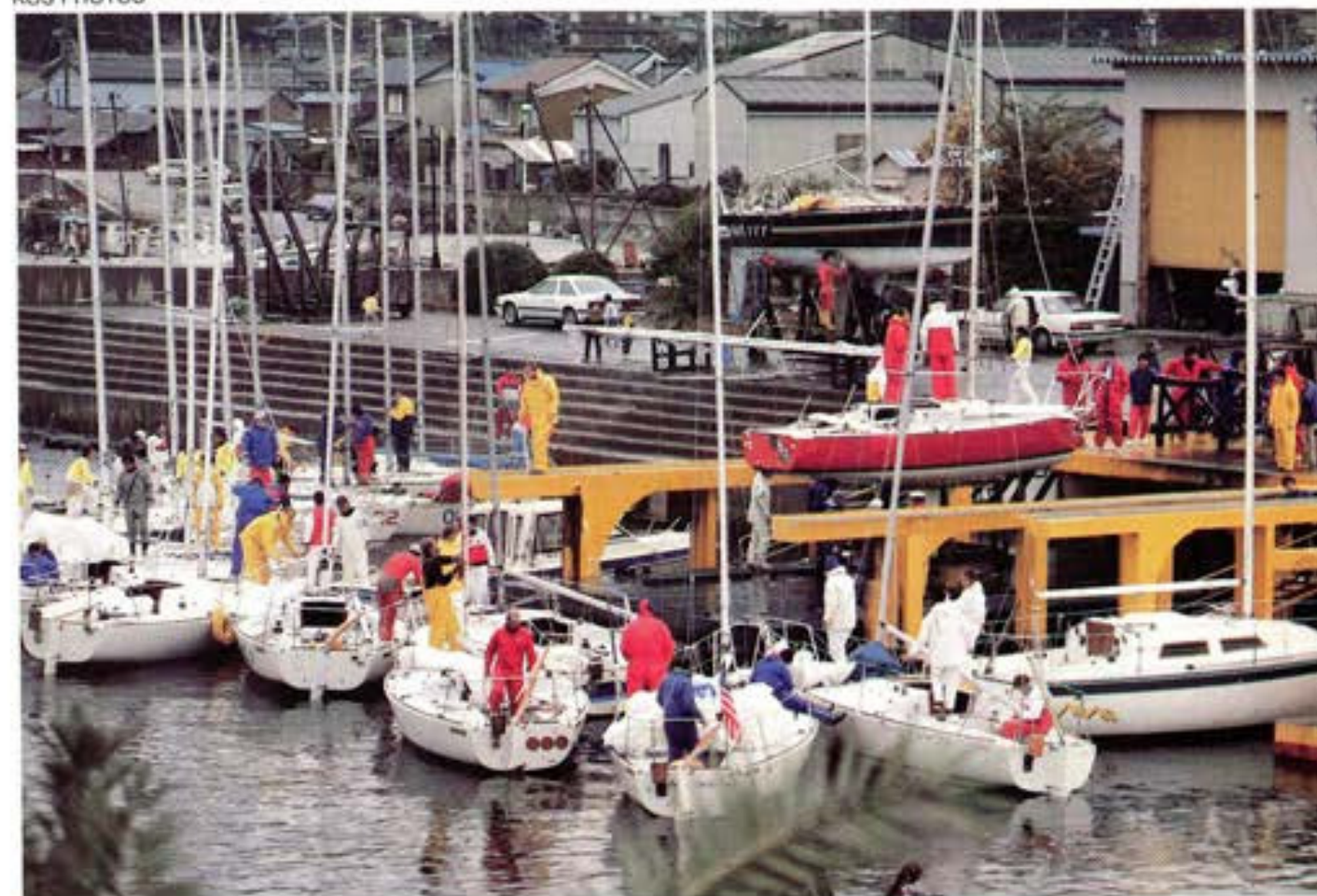
Top: DiAngelis of Italy (Bow No. 10) comes in at the mark, forcing roundup.

Middle: The launching area was a beehive of activity.

Bottom: Close racing downwind, with Brady just ahead of Wakeman.



KOS PHOTOS





1985 World Championship team, from left: Bill Shore, Chris Hutstader, Todd Berman, Brad Dimeo and Ken Read.

take second for the race. We were third, and watched as Curtis finished fifth, and Brady eighth. Owen took another 14, which put him in a pretty bad spot for the regatta, as was Baird. When we got in to the marina, we learned that Curtis was over early at the start, as was Morgan Reeser. These developments gave us a significant lead over our closest competitors, as well as the flexibility of not having a throw-out race yet. Everybody on the team got together and had a beer after we put the boat away, and it hit us that winning the Worlds was no longer a distant goal, but something that we could make happen as soon as the next day.

We achieved our goal in the fifth race, clinching the Worlds with 17 points. At the start, we got ourselves in a bad position that could have cost us the regatta. Al and Dave Constants tried to start at the port end, right at the boat down there. Since they were early, they had stopped their boat completely while luffing the boat to the weather of them. One thing led to another, and we too got caught up in the mess and ended up drifting onto the anchor line of the powerboat while all the boats to windward rolled past us in the moderate breeze. We snagged our rudder on the anchor line for a split second that seemingly took an hour to go by. After popping off the line, we snapped into action and proceeded to sail an extraordinary upwind leg. We wanted to go right because of the history of the light air, but were pinned by most of the fleet. Then we sailed through a starboard tack lift that made our position look dismal in

relation to the rest of the boats. We almost tacked and took a whole bunch of sterns to get to the right, but somehow Bill Shore talked us out of it. It would have been a monumental error, since at that point the wind started to go left a full 20 degrees.

As the boats on our hip started to tack, we knew that this was our chance to get back into the race. We flopped over onto port in a perfect position to take advantage of the backing breeze. The direction of the wind wavered back and forth slightly, but held long enough for us to cross all the boats that were on the middle and right parts of the course, as well as stay in front of the boats way out in the left corner. It was very close at the mark, but we just barely managed to get around in first. We held off all the boats close behind us for the rest of the race and took the bullet.

It did not hit us until we were halfway into the marina that we had not sailed a throw-out race yet, and pretty much everybody else had. That was it; we didn't have to sail anymore. It was very simple really, but we were so caught up in the competition that the idea of having won so soon came slow to us, and it hit us hard only when we got back to the marina and took a good look at the scores.

So *Maggie-San* did not sail the last race, which was a good thing because I sprained my ankle in a midnight sumo wrestling match with Ken Read (I think Kenny had some help, but he denies it). While Ken, Brad Dimeo, Bill Shore and Todd Berman put the boat away for the Japanese dentist that now owns the fas-

test J/24 in the world, I went out on the course and tried to shoot photographs in the driving rain. The wind was heavy and the waves were big as the fleet put up their 100 percent jibs for the last race. The wind shifted hard right before the start, so the line was re-set. Then the fleet endured several general recalls, with Brady and Owen doing a little match-racing while the Nissan helicopter hovered above them video taping the drama. Curtis punched a perfect start in the middle of the line and rounded the first mark with a good lead. Owen had a good race also, as did Al Constants, while Brady finished a disappointing 13th.

Brady sailed an excellent series, and no doubt used all the experience he has been getting in the last year (Jim won Bermuda Race Week, finished second at the North Americans, and was on the team with Read that won the Lancia Cup in Italy in October). "We were happy with how we finished," Jim said on the long jet ride home. "We set a goal to win; and while we didn't achieve it, we felt that we learned an awful lot and think that it was a good finish for our first World Championship".

Everyone enjoyed the final party where numerous awards were presented. The Bengt Julin Challenge Cup, deeded by Bengt Julin at the 1983 Worlds in Sweden and awarded to the yacht with the lowest point total in the first three races, went to *Maggie-San*. The President's Trophy, for the lowest scoring yacht helmed to a 40 year old or older and donated by the president of J Boats, was presented to Robert Johnstone, of *Wonder Woman*. In 1982 the J/24 Class Association of France donated the Eiffel Tower Trophy for the woman aboard the highest placing yacht in the World Championship, which was presented this year to Sina Sahlen, who crewed on Ed Baird's *China Town*. The new World Champion, Ken Read, and his crew received the World Championship Trophy, as well as a plaque written in Japanese, a plate, hats and several other mementos. The Japanese artist, Tadami, designed coffee mugs with cartoon drawings of J/24 sailors on them, which were given to each competitor. Plates were also presented to each race winner and to the top ten boats. The UK team honored everyone by shooting canned string all over. It was a great party and a fitting end to a successful J/24 World Championship.



Results
Nissan J/24 Class World Championship VII
November 15-24, 1985
Nissan Marina Tokai, Japan

POS	SAIL	YACHT	HELMSMAN	BOW NO.	COUNTRY	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOT
1	US-96	<i>Maggie-San</i>	Ken Read	15	U.S.A.	6	6	1	3	1	DNC	17
2	K-4088Y	<i>Luder</i>	E. Warden-Owen	43	England	1	1	14	14	2	2	20
3	US-3956	<i>Olive II</i>	Jim Brady	19	U.S.A.	4	7	2	8	4	13	25
4	US-3379	<i>American Garage</i>	K. Mahaney	17	U.S.A.	5	4	8	7	18	6	30
5	US-1985	<i>China Town</i>	Ed Baird	24	U.S.A.	3	3	26	15	13	5	39
6	US-4112	<i>Wild Goose</i>	Wiley Wakeman	20	U.S.A.	7	10	3	12	12	14	44
7	US-2579	<i>HJ</i>	Dave Curtis	23	U.S.A.	8	2	RET	PMS	3	1	57
8	J-2668	<i>Samurai Nippon</i>	K. Komatu	27	Japan	11	8	22	16	11	11	57
9	US-3939	<i>Pathei Mathes</i>	Mark Hillman	16	U.S.A.	9	12	33	23	6	8	58
10	J-2866	<i>Crimson J</i>	Robert Fry	28	Japan	12	16	30	20	5	7	60
11	US-4151	<i>Wonder Woman</i>	Bob Johnstone	25	U.S.A.	21	17	11	2	21	12	63
12	US-3493	<i>PDQ</i>	C. Millican	26	U.S.A.	13	18	5	31	25	10	71
13	I-98	<i>Abla</i>	F. Angelis	10	Italy	14	22	15	4	DSQ	18	73
14	US-3775	<i>Orca</i>	A. & D. Constants	21	U.S.A.	23	5	19	29	26	3	76
15	KC-3913	<i>Three Speed</i>	Andy Roy	08	Canada	10	14	29	27	16	17	84
16	KA-88	<i>Slack Alice</i>	Alex Nemeth	05	Australia	18	20	13	10	33	26	87
17	K-4043Y	<i>Ayesha-San</i>	N.P.F. Whipp	14	England	28	32	4	5	19	PMS	88
18	US-1993	<i>Jack Russel</i>	Morgan Reeser	18	U.S.A.	RET	11	23	PMS	8	4	89
19	J-3794	<i>Super Kids</i>	Takeyuki Iida	32	Japan	15	39	10	30	15	21	91
20	J-3814	<i>Boomerang</i>	T. Ninomiya	38	Japan	*22	13	7	11	32	DSQ	93
21	BL-735	<i>So-Da-Nos</i>	G. Low Beer	06	Brazil	37	29	12	1	23	29	94
22	J-3825	<i>Enterprise</i>	Y. Tsujimura	30	Japan	17	20	6	37	31	19	99
23	J-2697	<i>Apollonia</i>	K. Hatae	29	Japan	*25	24	20	24	7	24	99
24	I-121	<i>Pall E'Cannone</i>	S. G. Leonetti	11	Italy	2	15	28	PMS	DSQ	15	103
25	J-3555	<i>Blue Note</i>	Kiyomi Ito	33	Japan	20	33	18	6	34	27	104
26	K-3806	<i>Cyble 5</i>	Kazuma Mifune	42	Japan	27	38	25	9	20	25	106
27	J-3569	<i>Lightning Baron</i>	K. Shiokawa	35	Japan	24	36	17	34	10	23	108
28	I-116	<i>De Siree</i>	Marino Walter	09	Italy	16	31	32	35	17	20	116
29	J-2680	<i>Wind Quest</i>	T. Ichikawa	41	Japan	34	35	9	32	14	32	121
30	J-2891	<i>Lobster III</i>	Harumi Murase	34	Japan	19	30	21	25	27	34	122
31	J-4051	<i>Nagya</i>	Saburo Sato	36	Japan	DSQ	27	RET	18	24	16	128
32	KA-65	<i>Milliways</i>	Andrew York	02	Australia	DSQ	9	35	PMS	35	9	131
33	J-3795	<i>Bronco</i>	M. Tashiro	40	Japan	26	23	38	17	29	36	131
34	S-41	<i>Viva</i>	S. Kindeborg	12	Sweden	35	37	31	13	28	33	140
35	US-1726	<i>Kama Vivre</i>	Art Dufresne	22	U.S.A.	30	19	16	33	DSQ	RET	141
36	J-2456	<i>Hokurani II</i>	Kohzoh Inoue	37	Japan	36	41	27	36	9	35	143
37	J-2687	<i>Mahopoba II</i>	M. Yonetani	39	Japan	33	34	36	22	22	DNC	147
38	BL-632	<i>Cacha, Ca</i>	Paolo Pirani	07	Brazil	39	42	24	21	30	37	151
39	J-3565	<i>L'Etissia</i>	T. Shimaoka	31	Japan	31	25	RET	28	37	30	151
40	KA-111	<i>Kamikaze Again</i>	Bob Ross	04	Australia	*32	21	39	26	39	28	153
41	KA-85	<i>Wavecutter</i>	C. Thorburn	03	Australia	29	28	37	PMS	38	22	154
42	KA-12	<i>Jumping Jack</i>	Richard Hayes	01	Australia	38	40	34	19	36	31	158