

FRANCE WINS EUROPEAN SNIPE CHAMPIONSHIP SWITZERLAND SECOND, PORTUGAL THIRD. 10 NATIONS ENTER

—AS REPORTED BY HELDER SUARES DE OLIVEIRA, 1953 AND 1954 CHAMPION OF THE LISBON FLEET #188.—

The Snipe Championship of Europe took place last August in French waters and was conducted by the Cercle De La Voile D'Arcachon. We sent over Jaime Sacadura as skipper and Jose Alfaia as crew, these two being the National Champions of Portugal for 1954.

Two days before the first race, on the 7th of August, the Committee started measuring up the sails. We thought that this work would be done very thoroughly and efficiently, but we were disappointed with the slackness of the methods used. All boats were duly passed eventually, but the Spanish Snipe had to wait the approval of the European Secretary of the Class, because the hull was made of plywood and the measurers were in doubt about the thickness of the planking.

The Swiss boat and our boat were the most admired —ours because of the amount of stainless steel fittings, and the painting of the hull, and the Swiss on account of the plastic fittings. We could only find a few new ideas on the Swiss boat. It had a straight "breakwater", a self-bailing cockpit made of plywood with no floorboards, and a whisker pole of aluminum tubing which could be extended and contracted in order to speed up its use, especially when gybing. The faster boats all had a pronounced "V" transom.

Almost everybody had Snipes with minimum weight and centerboards with maximum weight. The slackness of the method of measuring up the boats was only surpassed by the irregular way of measuring up the sails. The French did not use a spring scale to straighten the sails, but simply laid the sails loose on the ground and measured them thus. The Spanish, Italian, and Portugeses delegates protested to the measuring committee, but we were told that no spring tube balance could be had at Arcachon, and that was that! We all laughed at this reply, for we considered it very irregular that no proper tools were being used at an "European" Championship. There was a mixture of cotton and nylon sails. France, Switzerland, Monaco, and Italy used Nylon. England, Spain, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, and Portugal used cotton and Norway's was admired because of excellent shape. The jibs were generally good, with Portugal having the largest sail.

But for the weakness in checking measurements, the rest of the organization was good. The Committee under the presidency of Mr. Beaumaine worked well on the protests and choice of courses. The courses, in my opinion, were clear enough, but Italy, Denmark, and England made a mistake in one of them and argued that the instructions were not very clear. The difference in languages did not appear to make any difference in the races.

Boats taken out of the water were kept in a separate place, but the way of handling all boats without a crane was not at all easy. Sometimes the bottom paint was scraped when placing the boats on the cradles during the operation of wheeling them up the incline.

Presentation of the prizes at the Casino was well organized. All of us had invitations, as well as the delegates of each country, and nobody was forgotten. The British delegate and I were given seats at the head table, where the Lord Mayor of Bordeaux and the President of the Cercle de la Voile, Mr. M. Delimal, were sitting. Mr. Delimal was very gracious to us, indeed. The opening ceremony was quite impressive and drew a large number of people. At this time, the various teams were introduced and flags of the ten competing nations were hoisted.

The first race, scheduled for the 9th at 3 P. M., had to be postponed to the next day due to the strong wind, which capsized the Danish boat. Therefore only this race was sailed on the 10th. The French team took the lead, followed by Spain, Switzerland, and Denmark. Portugal, after a bad start, recuperated and came up to third, but was passed by the Swiss near the finish line, because of a bad tack. France, Spain, Switzerland, and Portugal finished in that order.

The second race, with a medium wind, again gave the victory to France, followed by Portugal, Switzerland, and Monaco. Denmark, Italy, and England were disqualified for sailing the wrong course.

The third race was a harder fight, but France managed to win, followed by Italy, Portugal, and Switzerland. The French skipper, Poissant, had an advantage with his better knowledge of the local conditions of tide and wind.

The fourth race was cancelled because the wind failed and the time limit was exceeded. This race was repeated on Sunday morning with a light wind and victory went to the Swiss helmsman, who sailed a very intelligent course, defending himself well from the French, who finished second, followed by Sacadura, who took third place for Portugal.

Again, the fifth race was cancelled for lack of wind, the boats not finishing within the time limit. It was repeated on the day of the Congress, and almost had to be cancelled again due to lack of wind, but, fortunately, a breeze came up at the last minute and the boats just managed to get over the line in time. Italy had a protest against Portugal, but it was not handed to the Committee, presumably because it would not have affected the final results! The superiority of the French team is undisputable. They won four of the five races and showed real class, allied to a thorough knowledge of the various currents of the river at Arcachon, which, no doubt, helped them to win. Their choice of tacks proved invariably to be correct.

After the French, the Swiss were the most outstanding. It was the only team with a feminine crew. Renevier was a good helmsman and Mlle. Birkight a very good crew.

We need not praise Sacadura, for we all know he is also a very good skipper. However, he was handicapped by his cotton sails, as they were not suitable for the rainy weather, and Nylon sails had a very big advantage. All races were well contested and I would like to mention that, with such fluke winds prevailing when the repeat races took place, Sacadura and the French were the only two who managed to get around the last mark of the course. Alfaia was a very good crew for Sacadura.

Spain, represented by Salvador Pujadas and Enrique Mirteria, would have fought for third place with Sacadura, but they were rather irregular and, although good on windward legs, they lost way with free winds, especially running. Monaco came out fifth, because of Denmark and Italy being disqualified. The brothers, Manuêlo, however, did some very fine racing.

Vittorio Porta and Francisco Tubardi of Italy would have finished much better but for two disqualifications. They were rather good with gentle breezes. Ole Botved and Jorgen Stork of Denmark gave me the impression of being a good team. Their starts were always correct, but a disqualification and some bad tacks relegated them to seventh place.

Dany Graux (14 years old) and Freddy Michils represented Belgium. Per Skjonberg (with an Englishman for a crew) for Norway and Ronald Moody with A. S. Condee for England were the weakest teams.

The Congress took place in Bordeaux and all the delegates from the various nations took part under the Chairmanship of Mr. M. Rochat. Amongst various other matters, it was decided to suggest to the International Rules Committee that they should hurry the issuing of the measurement sheets for the building of Snipes in fiberglass and plywood. It was also decided that the racing instructions in the future should be issued in the language of the organizing country and in English and that championships should last seven days and not less than three races should count to be validated. This last resolution was induced by what almost occurred this time at Arcachon: the lack of wind almost forced upon the organizers the cancellation of the whole regatta! When the vote was taken to decide which country would