

Report from NED 108 - Jaap Straakenbroek about the classics at the 4 Nations Cup in Hellevoetsluis.

"I arrived at catclub Hellecat on Friday morning at approximately 7:30 am. Extra early because I wanted to make some minor adjustments to my DNA F1 classic. Luckily Benjamin Westerfeld from France was already there and was so nice to help me with the mast. The nice thing about these kinds of events is that you get to know new enthusiastic sailors and also meet old acquaintances. Most sailors sail in the foiling fleet, but fortunately also many good sailors in the classic fleet. Great to see new interest in the classics, because 24 competitors registered for the 4 Nations Cup. I expected the greatest opposition from Mickey Todd, Michel Warlop, Philippe Muyzers and Caroline van Beelen. But there appeared to be more good sailors that I didn't know yet, such as Christian Stock, Thomas Becker and Eric Meert.

We were lucky with the weather on Friday and there was a good wind of about 4 Bft. The race committee had planned 15 races in 3 days, so 5 per day and we would start at the same time as the foiling fleet. Our track was shorter with only 1 top mark, but the gate was the same for everyone. The first race started with 2 laps and all races would eventually consist of 2 laps, nice and easy even if we didn't know that beforehand.

I can't exactly remember all the details but the 1st race I didn't start well and was 5th at the top mark. Luckily I was able to use the trapeze downwind and had a very good speed and was able to finish 1st. That happened in a strange way, because the stern was quite out of the water and the bow quite in the water. It was the first time that I sailed in this wind with my classic C-boards and there appeared to be too much downforce in the rudders.

For the 2nd race I had adjusted my rudders considerably, because there was more wind, but this turned out to be wrong, because I had no good speed and finished 4th. The other sailors got good points: Mickey 1st and Caroline 2nd and Thomas 3rd.

For the 3rd race, I resetted the rudders back a bit and tried again. The 3rd and 4th races went better, 2 x 2nd but Mickey was on fire and sailed fast and smart 2 x 1st, Caroline and Philippe also had a good battle for 3rd place.

The 1st day ended with 4 races and most sailors thought it was enough, because there were quite a lot of big gusts. After the races we were served tasty snacks on the beach to keep the event corona-proof, so that felt very customer-friendly.

The 2nd day started with a good wind of at least 4 Bft and later in the day strong gusts of at least 20 knots. Somehow there were quite a few sailors too late at the start including myself and I started as one of the last at least 3 minutes after the starting signal. That promised to be my deduction race, but still 5th. This day it turned out that I had to fight quite a bit to get good places. Michel with the Marstrom went really fast downwind and Christian with the Nikita also went to the max even without winglets on the rudders. Unfortunately Caroline had capsized in the 1st race during the jibe, because the traveler blocked in the middle, which many of us experienced as well in the past or future! The wind had increased to 20 knots, so she decided to stop that day. Later several sailors followed to stop.

Mickey continued uninterrupted with high scores, even though his knee was bad. Out of 6 (?) races he scored 5 bullets!!! Michel had 1 bullet and several 2nd places. Because I sailed safe downwind and did not go into trapeze and made a few

mistakes, the results were less good than hoped, but still 2 x 2nd and 3rd place. Philippe had 2 good races, but decided to stop, because his age and condition forced him to stop.

The 3rd day would be the fight for the 2nd place with Michel, because Mickey could no longer be beaten. It was another beautiful day with a nice 4 Bft. The 1st race I started very offensive, so immediately at the starting ship I tacked to the right in order to sail my own race and came 1st at the top mark with a lead of at least 30 seconds, but during the second lap the wind dropped and I could no longer use the trapeze downwind and was overtaken in the last meters by Christian on the super fast Nikita. I did not understand that he was going so fast, because normally I am quite fast downwind. Bravo to Christian.

The 2nd race went very well again and I had a bullet with Mickey and Christian in places 2 and 3. The 3rd race Mickey managed to win again with Christian in 2nd place and I in 3rd. The last 2 races Mickey no longer had to sail, because he was already champion and he didn't want to injure his knee even more. I won the second race with Caroline on the Nikita 2nd and Philippe on the Vision 3rd. The last race I got a lot of opposition from Caroline who was even 1st on the 1st lap and I had to go full on the attack to stay ahead of her, Christian finished 3rd, also on a Nikita. Fortunately, I managed to keep my big opponent Michel behind me every race this day and because of that I became overall 2nd and Michel 3rd and Christian 4th on 2 points, but Mickey Todd, the biggest fellow of all became 1st. Congratulations for him!!

It was a very well organized event, as expected of catamaranclub Hellecat. We had beautiful races with many nationalities and a good sporting atmosphere. I hope that there are still sailors who practice classic A-cat sailing, because the game is the same and the costs are much lower. I therefore thank the entire organization of the 4 Nations Cup."

With sporty greetings,

Jaap Straakenbroek - NED 108