



Welcome to the ECC 2004

Dear all,

Last year's ECC was quite an experience for me – as Arno didn't know whether he would be able to join us in Mallorca, he asked me whether I would organise the boat charter for our crew and subsequently act as the skipper. All arrangements were made, the Grand Soleil 46 was chartered, Arno could join us in the end and our crew was as complete as in the previous years, except for one change: our friend Dieter decided to take a time-out and Gordon was welcomed to the team.

We all went down to lovely Mallorca, met a lot of old friends at the welcome reception at the Real Club Nautico in Palma and we were all looking forward to a nice week of friendly competition powered by some warm winds off the Mallorcan coast.

On the first day we already figured out that our boat was quick...very quick. Was the charter agent right in the end? Didn't he say that we had rented a "race goat" when we went through the formalities in Ca'n Pastilla?

Well, we were quick indeed.

But it has to be said that even a Grand Soleil doesn't do everything alone, the crew is still the most important piece of equipment on board!

And after the first two days we already started figuring out that we were about to miss our target for the ECC 2003 big time: we wanted to finish amongst the first 10...but never ever finish 1st.

In fact, we started serious discussions about our forward strategy on the second evening. We thought about taking on more ballast, sailing the race with the second reef in the main sheet and chasing the calms - or the like... But in the end we jointly agreed that we were not going to play foul. The team decided that we would do it if we really had to.

Well, we had to.

After winning the ECC 2003 as well as the Commodores' Cup we started checking out the things to be put in place for the ECC 2004. Tasks were assigned to our crew and we went after our individual assignments.

Needless to say that the whole organisation would have been a lot more complicated without Arno's very active support...guess, who's better at overlooking such a complex piece of work: a marketing guy or the well travelled project manager?
You've probably figured it out straight away.

It also has to be clearly stated that one can't organise such an event without strong partners.

We found Sasha Bradic and her company Adriatic Holidays. Sasha and her team were very eager to work with us on the organisation of the ECC 2004. Sasha knows her way around in Croatia and due to the fact that she comes from Split, she also has very good connections locally.

One of these connections is Igor Gazin, the owner of SunLife Charter, who spent a lot of time and effort chasing the necessary 54 boats and making arrangements with the harbour authorities and the local venues for welcome- and award party.

Honestly, without the support of Sasha and Igor (and all the others in the background) the organisation of the ECC 2004 would have been an absolute nightmare.
Therefore we owe them all a big Thank You, raise your glasses!

The ECC is all about meeting friends and colleagues, it's about sailing and a friendly competition fuelled by warm winds and it's about having fun for a week, away from the day-to-day challenges of our normal life at work.

...unfortunately the ECC is also about money.
And with this I mean not the money for the flights, the boats, the food and booze – it's about the money to pay for all the other "stuff": parties, shirts, caps, medals etc.
We started off saying that we would organise the event in the light of "back to the roots" – i.e. by keeping the whole event down-to-the-earth, not trying to top last year's venues but rather trying to keep the budget within limits...

Boy, it's tough.
With 350 participants in the event it's even tougher.
In times of recession and reduced marketing budgets at the various companies it's getting really tough.

Nevertheless we managed to pull up a group of sponsors for the ECC 2004. All companies who so gratefully decided to support this event are listed in the logbook and are also to be found on the ECC 2004 web site (<http://www.ecc-sailing.com>). Please take your time to review their company profiles and maybe these generous companies can be of help to you in your professional life as well.

I would like to take the opportunity to express a special Thank You to all our sponsors and I would very much appreciate if you would join me in doing so. Without the help and generosity of our sponsors it would have been merely impossible to organise the ECC 2004. Thank you very much indeed, also in the name of the organisation committee and the 350 participants of this fantastic sailing event.

Arno, another big Thank You has to go to you, as nobody was as active as you were in identifying sponsors for us. Great job!

Now, what was the starting point of all this?
Right, I was about to write a welcome note to the participants of the ECC 2004.

Having read all of the above, you probably figured that we spent quite some time and effort to come up with the 11th edition of a successful sailing venue. It's been a team effort throughout – as most things are when you are sailing as part of a crew. We've had fun, we've struggled and we've surely doubted the decision taken on this ominous second night in Mallorca quite a bit...

To hell with it!

We're almost there and I am convinced that we will have a great week in Croatia!

Fellow sailors, I am looking forward to meeting you all on the 8th of May at the Marina in Split; ready to roll and eager to be part of yet another edition of the ECC. It is going to be a week full of fun, hopefully also full of sun and good winds. We are all looking forward yet again to meet old friends (and get to know new friends), to reflect and discuss the happenings of the past 12 months since we last were together and to enjoy the competition on the waters of Croatia.

I don't know what you think, but I'm counting the days already!

See you soon

Michael

...and the whole crew of the Grand Soleil 46 "Serenya" who has done a terrific job in the organisation: Arno, Juergen, Gordon, Ollie, Thomas, Hermann, Jaki. Thanks guys!!!