

## Regional Powerboats



Wrong side up: Both Victory Team pilots emerged unhurt after their boat flipped soon after the second restart to the European Grand Prix in Arona, Italy, yesterday.

# Home joy for Italians

Matteo seals European Grand Prix shortened by two spectacular incidents

By Staff Reporter

Home team Six kept their nerve to win the European Grand Prix, round five of the UIM Skydive Dubai XCAT World Series, after the race was restarted twice following two spectacular incidents in Arona, Italy, yesterday.

Thanks to efficient race management and safety procedures, all four pilots emerged from their damaged boats unhurt, but the dramatic beginning to proceedings left the remaining teams rather shaken.

Racing in their new boat, Six, the Italian duo of Matteo Nicolini and Tomaso Polli, however, held their nerve to survive the two restarts after Consul Brokers flipped on the first start and Speed Cat Run cham-

pions Victory Team suffered the same fate after the second start.

"Matteo said before the race it's going be very tricky at the start. There was a gust of wind and that was really tricky. Obviously, it gets quite nerve-wracking the third time around," said Polli.

Meanwhile, with Consul Brokers and Victory Team out of the running, Six, who had originally started the race in fourth position, took advantage of the restart to overtake Skydive Dubai.

There was more drama to come, however, as Series leaders Fazza, who started in pole position, battled with engine trouble and fell back to seventh by the finish of the shortened 12-lap race.

"It just wasn't our day," admitted

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more rounds will decide the series champion

Arif Al Zafeen. "We had problems with the engine from the start."

As for Six, they benefitted from a penalty lap, imposed on Qatar Team for an incorrect start to eventually take the lead and finally the win in 31 minutes 13.07 seconds.

Skydive Dubai (Jay Price/Rashid Al Tayer) finished second and Mouawad (Omar Danial/Gary Balough) third.

"It's great! When you win in Italy it's the best," said home pilot Nicolini. "I have never seen a crowd like

this in XCAT. I saw crowds in Cernobbio last year and in Lake Como, when I was in the Class1 and I won with the Class1, but I think it's more crowded here, and this podium and everything here was super."

World Professional Powerboat- ing Association general secretary Sid Bensalah said: "Our best wishes go to Matteo and Tomaso for their excellent victory.

"I must also thank the safety teams for the fast and efficient way they, and the UIM race officials, handled both incidents. It is credit to them, and the many safety procedures and regulations we have in place in XCAT racing that none of the four pilots involved suffered any injuries this afternoon on what proved to be a great day of racing."

## IN BRIEF

### Friday run dedicated in memory of late Nasr

**FRIDAY RUN:** The Dubai Creek Striders are dedicating their Friday morning run (September 13) to Roy Nasr, the triathlete who was killed near Safa Park in Dubai recently.

Club chairman Marek Szymanek said: "In light of this tragic accident, the club wishes to stress the importance to both motorists and athletes, to 'be safe and be seen' on the roads.

"The running community has been deeply saddened and shocked by the news and as a club we wanted to pay tribute to Roy. At the moment we have about 160-200 runners on our Friday runs, so safety is a huge concern. Like cyclists, we too use public roads. From now on, as a tribute to Roy we will hold an annual 'Fluorescent Friday Run' in September."

### ADSC and ADM in deal to promote sports activities

**PARTNERSHIP:** The Abu Dhabi Sports Council (ADSC) and Abu Dhabi Municipality (ADM) yesterday signed a five-year agreement aimed at establishing new community sports utilities and centres in the capital.

The agreement stems from the strategic plans and programmes of the ADSC to boost inter-governmental cooperation with various entities as well as aims to enhance the development of the sporting sector in Abu Dhabi.

The two parties have agreed to establish and run a number of community sport utilities and facilities in order to encourage various segments of the community to practice sporting activities and games that suit them the best.

### Stage set for fitness championship finale

**FITNESS:** Americans Kenneth Leverich and Lindsey Valenzuela remained at the top of the leaderboard in qualifying at the 2nd Dubai Fitness Championships.

Leverich is at the top of the men's category with a time of 11:17.44 minutes while Valenzuela leads the women's competition in a time of 12:07.13 minutes.

The qualifying rounds concluded last night and the finals will now take place at Dubai Mall's ice rink over a period of three days from September 12-14.

## Basketball



Clubs not playing ball: Ben Slimane.

# Slimane urges clubs to do more for players

By Kenny Laurie

UAE basketball technical director Mounir Ben Slimane believes the only way the country can produce top players is for the clubs to change their priorities.

Emirati basketball came into focus over the summer after Dubai won the right to host the 2014 FIBA Under-17 Basketball World Cup, spurring the UAE Basketball Federation into action to create a team worthy of the competition.

Ben Slimane and his team are working hard to create a new gener-

ation of top players, but he believes that clubs get in the way.

"This is the biggest issue," the Tunisian told *Sport360*.

"We cannot say it is about competence versus incompetence. The coaches have their own challenges and their own way of working.

"But we have different goals. Our goal is to create a good versatile player for the national team, their goal is to win the next game. You cannot blame them. If they put in more effort into their development, they can win the league and produce better players.

**"Our goal is to create a good player for the national team"**

- Slimane

"People wonder why in Bahrain they are better, (its because) they start their programmes three or four years earlier."

UAE coach Zoran Zupcevic has previously criticised clubs, saying that when the UAE Basketball Federation first receive players at the age of 16, most of them lack even the

most basic and fundamental skills and techniques.

During last week's U17s Gulf Cup in Dubai, the highlight was a clear disparity between the UAE and other teams. The UAE youngsters were given a crash course in international basketball, exposing their lack of knowledge of the game and fundamental techniques.

The picture isn't bleak though. Ben Slimane said: "We continue our programme. On Tuesday we have a meeting with club coaches to look at what we did and what we're going to do next."