

CUP UPDATE

Less than a week after Alinghi announced the little-known United Arab Emirate of Ras al-Khaimah as the venue for the 33rd America's Cup, BMW Oracle Racing CEO Russell Coutts was asked whether his team's all-purpose trimaran would be at a disadvantage in the expected light winds on the Persian Gulf.

"We're not sure it's a light-air venue," he said, "and we're not sure Alinghi's boat is necessarily a light-air boat. I think both teams can adapt their boats to the various conditions."

The first two opinions would seem to put Coutts in the minority. Initial reports are that RAK, as it's known, will feature consistent single-digit seabreezes in February, and that the Alinghi catamaran was built with that in mind.

RAK is the northernmost emirate in the UAE, occupying the western coast of the spit of land that pinches the Persian Gulf into the Straits of Hormuz. It has a population of approximately 300,000 and limited oil reserves, at least compared to its neighbors.

The syndicate bases are to be on an island in Al Hamra Village, a new luxury resort 14 miles west of Ras al-Khaimah City.

Another topic Coutts sidestepped during his team's press day in mid August was whether the team would contest in court the validity of RAK, which is in the Northern Hemisphere, as a venue.

"We do not believe that RAK is deed compliant," he said. "Having said that we're going to take a look at the conditions, see what logistical support is there, before we made a decision on whether or not we oppose having the event in RAK."

However, at press time there seemed little doubt the 33rd America's Cup was headed back to court for one reason or another. In late August, BMW Oracle Racing announced the addition of legal heavyweight David Boies to its team.

—STUART STREULI

The Third Coast Rebuilds



IN 2005, THE TWIN SCOURGES OF fire and water brought on by Hurricane Katrina destroyed the facilities at New Orleans' Southern YC. This past summer, the venerable club christened a new, world-class clubhouse with a series of parties that celebrated the end of a stormy chapter in its 160-year history.

The resilience demonstrated by the members of Southern YC over the past four years typifies the character of sailors all along the Gulf Coast. Only 60 days after the tragic storm made landfall, a 36-boat fleet turned out for the Southern YC's 156th Closing Regatta. Many of the entries proudly displayed battle scars, and nearly 300 people celebrated defiantly in the shadow of the club's burned-out husk, overlooking ravaged marinas and enormous swaths of the surrounding city where their homes laid in waste.

Melted within the wreckage of the club were countless trophies and artifacts earned over a century and a half of racing, including four trophies presented by Sir Thomas Lipton in the early 1900s, one of which is gra-



While construction of a new clubhouse (background) was underway, New Orleans' Southern YC operated out of three temporary trailers (foreground), which members dubbed Triple-Wide YC.

ciously being restored by the Lipton tea company using the original London silversmith.

Katrina destroyed or severely damaged 18 of the 33 clubs in the Gulf Yachting Association. Most have been rebuilt, but few match the scale and grandeur of Southern YC's new 30,000-sq. ft. facility. With a ground floor located 27 feet above sea level and a state-of-the-art fire-prevention system, the sturdy new clubhouse is better equipped to withstand future hurricanes. What racers like best about the building are its spacious locker rooms and its towering height, which allows for excellent spectating of races held right out in front of the club on Lake Pontchartrain.

Proud of the organization's accomplishments all along the Gulf Coast, GYA commodore Judy Reeves says, "It's been a long, hard trek, but

the reopening of the yacht clubs has been a tremendous boost to our morale and quality of life, especially with the major national regattas that have already come through or are filling up the GYA schedule."

As they bid farewell to the blue-roofed trailers that served as their clubhouse for the past four years—during which they jokingly referred to the place as Triple-Wide YC—the sailors of Southern YC and the entire GYA hope to remind the rest of the sailing world that they are still alive and kicking. More importantly, sailors here have learned through recent history that boats, yacht clubs, and even their houses are not the most significant things in life. What matters most are family, friends, community, and, of course, a great sense of humor.

—TROY GILBERT