

Multiple Firsts at 2019 Blind Fleet World Championships at Kingston Yacht Club

The World Championships for Blind Fleet racing was held for the first time in Canada. Kingston Yacht Club generously hosted the event from Sept 2 to 8th. Seven club members graciously loaned their personal 24 ft Sharks to form the fleet for the regatta.

Fourteen teams from Australia, France, Great Britain, Japan, the USA, and Canada participated. All teams had fourteen races over the week-long event. The teams were challenged by a wide range of weather conditions from very light and shifty to over 20 knots.

There are 3 separate sight divisions in paralympic blind sports.

B1 athletes have no vision or at most light perception.

B2 allows athletes up to 5 degrees of peripheral vision or at best, an acuity of 20/400 after correction.

B3 requires athletes to have no more than 10 degrees of peripheral vision or at best, an acuity of 20/200 after correction.

Both the helm and mainsheet trimmer are blind or visually impaired. There is two sighted crew on board: a tactician and a jib trimmer. The tactician is not allowed to touch any controls on the boat and communicates instructions to the helm primarily. The jib trimmer verbalizes trim to mainsheet trimmer and is not allowed to touch the main or helm. If the tactician or the jib trimmer touch the main or helm, then the boat is obligated to take a penalty turn.

First place in the B3 division was won by the Canadian team of Chris Jonas (helm), Jodi Munden (mainsheet trimmer), Melanie Gummer (tactician) and Peter Van Rossem (jib trimmer). This was the first blind championships for both the sighted crew. It was also the first-ever gold medal result for Canada in World Championships.

The Canadian B2 team with David Brown at the helm claimed silver for Canada. Hub Steenbakkers (jib trimmer) had raced previously in Japan with David Brown in the world championships in 2013. This was the first world championship for main trimmer, Ginny Duff and tactician, Robin Wynne-Edwards. The team could have competed in the B1 division but moved up to B2 to improve overall squadron result opportunities.

The Canadian B1 team had 3 first time competitors: Tammy Adam (helm), Ryan van Dyl (jib trimmer) and Tony Snell (tactician). Brian Arthur was the mainsheet trimmer and has competed before in the world championships. In her first world championships, Tammy Adams helmed the Canadian B1 team to a fifth-place finish in a tight field of seven. The results for the top three teams were only separated by 2 points.

The overall squadron cup totals the result from all three fleets for each country. Canada finished second to Great Britain. This is the best overall result Canada has had in World blind fleet racing. We would like to thank all that have supported the Canadian team in accomplishing these best ever results!



Pictured from left to right: Peter Van Rossem, Melodie Gummer, Jodi Munden, and Chris Jonas



Pictured from left to right: Robin Wynne-Edwards (tactician), David Brown (helm), Ginny Duff (mainsheet trimmer) and Hub Steenbakkers (jib trimmer).



Back Row: Hub Steenbakkers, David Brown, Robin Wynne-Edwards, Ryan Van Dyl, Brian Arthur, Tony Snell

Middle row: Melodie Gummer, Ginny Duff, Chris Jonas, Tammy Adams

Front row: Jodi Munden, Peter Van Rossem

Photos courtesy of Geoff Webster
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