

A big year ahead

With the final tally of 2014 ORCi and ORC Club certificates reaching 9,314 worldwide, the ORC system seems well poised for use in some important championship events in 2015. There may be as many as four ORC championships held this year in regions as disparate as southern Europe, eastern Europe, the Baltic and South Korea – a first in the 40-year history of the organisation.

The most important of these will be the ISAF-sanctioned ORC World Championship, starting on 27 June at the Real Club Náutico de Barcelona. From its superb base in Port Vell, in the heart of one of the world's finest cities, the organisers at RCNB have had to set a limit of 140 boats to accommodate the teams while ensuring a high-quality event.

The city has been very co-operative working with RCNB to create a welcoming venue, being no stranger to hosting world-class events such as the 1992 Olympics, various Audi MedCups, the Barcelona World Race and the region's own Trofeo Conde de Godó, one of the oldest sailing trophies in Spain. The 42nd edition of

internet infrastructure will also allow for live video coverage during the inshore races, a feature rarely seen outside the world's most elite events.

Up to 80 teams are expected, mainly from the Baltic region. Two course areas are planned, with room for a third if there is demand. Race management will be led by talent imported from Italy including PRO Alfredo Ricci, who managed the 2013 ORC Worlds in Ancona. And like the worlds, the Europeans have a tune-up regatta at the same venue in the week before the main event: the Estonian ORC National Championship.

At both Barcelona and Pärnu race managers will use Performance Curve Scoring for the inshore races, where the full power of the ORC VPP is available to measure actual performance relative to rated potential. The programme used will also finally this year move to being web-based, so results can be broadcast as finishes occur in real time. This will be a leap forward for competitors, spectators and media who are not all intuitively aware of the

time allowances that create the corrected time results, and often have to wait for the output well after the finish of racing.

Another ORC continental championship this year will be in yet another beautiful location: Lake Balaton, Hungary. Here on the north shore of the lake a few dozen light, fast high-performance sportboats from 6m to 9m will meet on 19 May for the ORC European Sportboat Championship. This ORC event was started in Switzerland in 2004, and has been held throughout Europe in mostly inland lake locations.

The host club for the regatta, the Balatonfüredi YC, was founded in 1867 and is one of the oldest clubs in Europe, with members participating in the Olympics going back to 1928. The club remains an important breeding ground for young talent in the Olympic classes, so a sportboat event should be very competitive.

And last but certainly not least is the possible addition of a third ORC continental championship: the first-ever ORC Asian Championship, proposed for South Korea.

Last year this event was ready to launch at the Busan Super Cup in May, but the Korean ferry tragedy a month earlier shocked the whole country and led to the cancellation of the regatta.

Lying as Korea does at the crossroads of northeast Asia, big regattas here can attract entries from throughout the region, with teams arriving from as far as Vladivostok, Qingdao, Taipei and Japan, as well as throughout the Korean peninsula. Generous subsidies from local government support these entries' attendance with berthing and accommodation, elaborate ceremonies and social events, plus prizemoney for podium finishers.

And for those who may think these championship regattas are open and therefore not serious, consider that each includes at least two full days of measurement and inspection for all participants, where boats, sails and equipment are confirmed to comply with all ORC and OSR rules. Furthermore, throughout the event teams who finish in the top ranks are routinely put once again through rigorous measurement controls to ensure compliance.

Occasionally boats are caught out of measurement trim (sometimes by accident), and the matter is brought to the jury. Fortunately ORC rules contain prescribed penalties that specify the allowable tolerances and corrected time remedies for these kinds of infractions, striking a balance between fairness and integrity. This is important so that the class winners will be respected for their efforts and be celebrated as true champions...

Dobbs Davis



DANIEL FORSTER/ROLEX

A 19-strong Farr 40 fleet enjoy tight racing at the 2014 worlds in San Francisco. The Farr 40 has proved reasonably competitive in open ORC racing, particularly with a few simple modifications. It is a little light and overcanvassed for IRC, however – except in light air

this prestigious regatta will be held 11-14 June, serving nicely as a warm-up for the worlds.

The worlds' format calls for two days of measurement, inspections and practice, followed by inshore racing held a short distance off the coast. Two or even three course areas will be used, while the long offshore race will send the fleet in either direction along the coast for an overnight race designed to take 18-24 hours.

Some 60 of the entry slots are already filled, and even though the organisers reserve the right to allow 20 wild card entries there is still likely to be a waiting list. ORC worlds events are becoming quite popular: this will be the fifth consecutive year of over 100 entries, and looks set to attract participants from 20 or more countries. It's no wonder ORC is receiving bid proposals for hosting this event stretching out to 2018.

Later in the summer over 10-16 August the Pärnu YC and the ESS Kalev YC are partnering to host the Volvo Estonia ORC European Championship. The venue in Pärnu, Estonia's official summer capital, features beaches and offshore islands that help frame a west-facing bay on the Baltic that entices a daily seabreeze... creating perfect racing conditions. Once again the format consists of two days of measurement followed by five days of inshore and offshore racing.

Like RCNB, the Pärnu YC is a downtown port venue that ensures easy access and spectating in a country where the enthusiasm for sailing creates headline news. Estonia's strong