



Match racing on an inland ocean

Large rollers envelope the Nations Cup fleet. Mark Wessel photo

They came from all corners of the Earth expecting gentle, little lake conditions, but what they got was rollicking good fun in big breeze and big waves. Laurie Jury of New Zealand and Claire Leroy, France, won the ISAF Nations Cup Grand Final Open and Women's divisions, respectively, in racing marked by strong winds and big waves in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, on Lake Michigan in September.

"We expected the lake to be light air, not like an ocean," Leroy said. "We learned a lot about sailing the boat in heavy weather." Leroy, who won the event for the third consecutive time, appreciated sailing the Elliott 6m in the rough conditions that may be similar to those found in Weymouth, England, during the 2012 Olympics in the women's match racing event. The open division sailed in Sonars.

Conditions were brisk for the finals, with a strong onshore southeast 15- to 18-knot breeze with gusts to 20, and the seas built to 3 to 6 feet, with larger breaking waves roaring through the starting area, putting boat handling at a premium.

"It was breathtaking, but really demanding conditions. I was very impressed with how well the sailors handled the boats in the rough conditions," said ISAF President



An Elliott 6m launches off a wave. Chris Gribble photo

Goran Petersson, who watched the final racing on the water. "It is really unique in the history of the Nations Cup to have a three-time winner."

The Nations Cup for match racing is held every two or three years, and sailors must qualify from regions to compete. Nineteen teams competed in this year's Nations Cup.

"We are really excited to have won the Nations Cup. It is our first Grade 1 win," said Jury, who is on a match-racing streak, winning the U.S. Grand Slam Match Race Series consisting of four Grade 2 events. "It was really tough to get here. We had to win

against the best top-ranked New Zealand and Australia match racers."

The 2011 event was hosted by Sail Sheboygan, which coordinated with the city to offer a week of activities open to the public centered around the event.

"I was very impressed how much the community was able to watch the races. Not many places can do that," Petersson said. "Everyone was so nice in Wisconsin. When you come down to it, it is about the people who make a successful sailing program and event."

Visit www.nationscup2011.org for full results.