

2005 German International 2.4mR Championship

story and pictures by Zoltan Pegan, AUS 11, our Aussie in Budapest

I came to Budapest two years ago to start up a Sailability program with 3 Access 303 dinghies. In a rapid-fire series of events I found myself picking up the pieces of a long-lost love and got married and settled in Budapest for an indeterminate period of time. The Sailability program hasn't been as successful as my personal life, but it seems to be about to take off. What it all boils down to is that I haven't been sailing anywhere near as much as I would like, or was used to in Sydney, so a recent invitation to sail in the 2005 German International 2.4mR Championship was just what I needed.

Wilfried Klein, Chairman of Disabled Sailing Germany, invited me to join them for the competition to be held on Brombachsee in Bavaria, 25-29 May 2005. Brombachsee is a picturesque little lake, 50 km SSW of Nurnberg, surrounded by pine trees and gently rolling hills. The air is so clean that breathing is a pleasure, not just an activity necessary for the continued survival of the individual. The lake is quite rectangular, less than 1 km wide and 3 km long, running east to west lengthwise. There are three sailing clubs sharing a hill on the southern shore with a view overlooking the eastern half of the lake, a tidy marina with 3 cranes, and there's a sandy beach for swimming.

I'd brought my good racing sails with me from Sydney when I moved to Budapest two years ago, but I needed a boat to put my bum in. I asked if any were for charter and Wilfried said he could provide one from his club. Excellent. Accommodation was a little less easy, as I was a late entry. The local wheelchair-friendly accommodation was booked out. A little searching found an IBIS hotel in Nurnberg, 50 km away, with one room left but at "event" prices since there was a festival on and it was Formula 1 weekend to boot. (The last time we needed a hotel in Germany, it was September and Munich, and then it was Oktoberfest – in September – so it was the higher "event" prices then, too. What have they got against me?)

My wife, Eva, and I drove from Budapest. It's 780 km one way. A solid 8 hour drive with fuel stops if you keep to the posted speed limits. Less if you drive like a German. We arrived after 6 PM on Wednesday to find Brombachsee becalmed and basking in sunshine. I went to the regatta office to check in and get the sailing instructions. The SI was in German and I asked if an English translation was available. They said that the person who knew where that was would be back soon. Opening ceremonies consisted of 3 speeches in German, of which I only understood the "willkommen, ...Budapest und Sydney" so I knew they were talking about me. They also mentioned black flag, but not in the same sentence. I later learned that what was said was that in the event of a black flag for the crew boats (who would start before us), Rule 30.3 would be in effect for us too.

Outside, three flags hung limply from the flagpole, the Aussie, the Danish and the German. These would eventually be joined by the AP for most of the weekend. We headed off to Nurnberg to find our hotel and rest up for the competition.

Thursday morning we arrived lakeside to find about 6 knots blowing from the east. Plenty of activity with boats getting ready for the 1 PM start. We polished the road grime and bugs off "Max" and checked out the condition of the bottom of the boat. The rudder was straight and had no play or wobble in it. The bung did not tighten when fully screwed in but it felt snug enough. The boat went in the water and we went down the ramp to check it out from the inside. There were a few dry leaves under the floorboard, the manual pump had a wide-bore hose and the diaphragm was intact. Cunningham missing, and the lines at the gate needed to be re-routed but no frayed lines or broken bits. The overall condition looked very good. We measured the rake of the mast, and prepared the main but not the jib. I wanted to see what the wind would do before deciding on which jib to use.

Went to have lunch and ask for the sailing instructions in English again. Regatta office was closed but I found one of the office staff and she apologized that she had forgotten, but she would check again. I would have to decipher the German text.



The wind was easing a little and the light weather jib was the go. While getting ready to launch, two people came to ask about the boats and they picked the only two people who didn't speak German in the whole fleet. Out to the starting area just a few minutes before the first signal, no time to sail up the course but the crew boat fleet of 6 would start 5 minutes before us so I'd watch what happened to them. There were 15 of us 2.4s and for the first time in a long time I had no idea of what anyone else in the fleet liked to do at the start, nor who was hot and who was not, other than Heiko.

RACE 1. I considered a pin-end port start very briefly but the RC boat was shifting right more often than left, so a conservative start in clear air in the right half of the start line was the strategy. The majority of the fleet was bunching up in the right third, so I just stayed to port of them and started clear but a few seconds late. After the start it looked like I was 6th, with Heiko pulling out of the pack first. Closest to me was GER 99. The crew boats had sailed to the top mark mostly up the center or left and 99 was going that way, so I followed while watching Heiko and half the fleet go right towards the southern shore. We two were actually making gains on the fleet most of the way upwind until a significant right shift put those on the right side over the layline and they powered in to the mark while we took a big knock. GER 99 was upwind of the off-set mark. I rounded 9th to start the first run. By the bottom mark I'd worked my way up to 5th. On the second beat I crossed in front of GER 13 and tacked onto port to cover. He tacked away and I realized that I probably hadn't made a new friend with that move so early in the regatta. Within 15 seconds I got this back with interest as GER 8 was closing on starboard. I bore away to go behind and she eased off to make my job harder. I called out "hold your course" but she either didn't understand English or didn't care. I had to make a big duck to go behind her. Going right turned out to be a good choice at this point and when we next crossed paths I was 3 boat lengths ahead of GER 8 and in 4th place. She caught me on the downwind run and I rounded the leeward mark behind her. GER 8 went left and I went right. When I tacked to starboard she was coming my way and she was just far enough ahead to cross and turn to dump on me again. I tacked to port, she tacked to cover, and then held the cover until she could go for the line with me following meekly behind for a 6th place finish. I was curious to find out who this woman was who had just thrashed me on the course without ever having said a word.

RACE 2. The winds were on and off and now obviously favouring the right side of the course. I chose another clear air start and my timing was better. I was pointing higher than the lead boats and keeping pace, which should be a winning combination but while I went further right than before and was making a beeline for the windward mark, there was more wind closer to shore and Heiko was first to the top. I rounded in 2nd place. On the run the wind went from light to lighter. Looking behind to see what might be coming, there was fresh breeze heading my way but it was bringing the fleet with it. Halfway down the run I had 3 German boats running side by side, wing-and-wing bearing down on me. This trio blew past me like a freight train. Others went by on my left. I got going again and followed. On the second lap I made progress and was 4th for the last run. Nearing the bottom of the run the two leaders, Heiko and Bent (the Dane) were in a hole near the shore (the first time that the shore side didn't pay) and I found myself alongside GER 99. We rounded close behind the two leaders, who went left for the short beat to the finish. We went right.

, I saw that Heiko had found another hole on the left just before the finish. 99 and I had chance to beat these guys to the finish! In the end there was just enough breeze for Heiko to get his nose across the line before GER 99, then the Dane got there and I was a close 4th. It was an exciting finish! And after 5 PM. It took another 20 minutes or so for the rest of the fleet to finish. Old habits were coming back into play and I absently tried the bilge pump. I got water! I pumped out what had seeped in around that not quite tight bung. I'd get it taped over before we started out tomorrow. We hung around in case there was another start, although it was unlikely since the little wind there was would surely die as the sun went lower. Had a good long chat with Dr Klaus Chelius in GER 47 while the rest of the fleet finished the second race.



After the last 2.4 finished, sure enough, the RC signalled another start.

RACE 3. A good start and a beeline for the top mark again while Heiko and the fleet went to the southern shore again. I was 3rd at the top behind GER 17. This turned out to be Gesine Reichl, who I've met before. We rounded the mark and the breeze died. Heiko had gone left with the last of the breeze and was a long way ahead. When there was something to work with we went straight down the center. Looking back, the fleet was drifting in a big hole just to lee of the windward mark. Then Heiko was sitting there on the left and we were fast approaching the leeward mark. I got the inside position and it looked like we would overtake Heiko when I realized that something was missing. The RC boat was gone. Looking back upwind, the rest of the fleet was still sitting there near the top mark. No RC there. They'd simply up and left without bothering to let us know. Must be Heineken time. We 3 made it in on the last of the breeze. I don't know what happened to the 12 other boats, when they got back. I didn't see anyone going out to tow them in. It was a long way to paddle a 2.4mR.

We had dinner at an excellent Greek restaurant on highway B2 on the way back to Nurnberg.

The next day (Friday) was calm from sunrise to sunset. The AP was up. There was a forecast of some local wind after 5 PM. I asked again for sailing instructions in English. Wilfried said that they had to have them for an international competition. The regatta office promised them later. While waiting for wind and those sailing instructions I had a chance to meet the sailors behind the numbers. Found out that GER 99 was Detlef Müller-Bölling, and GER 8 was Martina Koß, a teenager who had come up from the Optimists. Martina handled the 2.4 very nicely and will be even harder to beat when she gets older and meaner. (I mean this in a nice way. There aren't enough women sailing in our sport, and it's good to see a young woman with so much talent and such a fierce competitor). The Dane was Bent Sörensen.

We went sightseeing and checked out the village of Pleinfeld. Back mid-afternoon in case there was anything happening. Nope. Time for a swim. Then at 5 o'clock the water at the eastern end of the lake start to show signs of some breeze. By 5:15 the lake was ruffled from one end to the other but no signal for us to go anywhere. By 5:30 it was calm again. The locals must have known.

Saturday (day 3 of the competition) was a copy of the previous day, only hotter. There were only patches of breeze around the lake and the temperature was up to 34°C. I'd given up on asking for sailing instructions as I had the course and signals down pat. At 5 o'clock we decided that it was time for a swim again. Just as we got to the beach there was a single horn and the AP came down. As there wasn't ANY wind, I figured that they were just calling it quits for the day. Eva went swimming. Ten minutes later Wilfried phoned to ask where we were because they wanted to launch the fleet! We rushed to get the gear out of the car and I was dead last to leave the dock. The others weren't that far ahead, since it was a real drifter. There simply wasn't any wind. I got a tow, along with the 2nd last boat to leave shore. We got to the area and the RC started the sequence for the crew boats. With just 40 seconds before their start, the AP went up and the whole circus moved ever so slowly to the far eastern end of the lake. Then, miraculously but well after 6 PM, the breeze started coming down the lake from the west! It was patchy, but it would turn out to last the duration of the race and it would be the last we'd see for the weekend.

RACE 3 (again). I blew the start. Heiko and 2 others cruised slowly along the line 20 seconds before the start. I figured to set up a few metres below the line and be at max throttle with 15 seconds to go. Then the wind went VERY soft and the other 11 boats all came from the RC end and I was buried. I crossed the line 14th and in dirty air. Well, there was a long way to go yet and the wind was very patchy, blowing in channels or strips. By the windward mark I was 9th, which I held to the bottom. Hunting for breeze on the second beat, I stayed right of the fleet and at the top I was 5th behind Martina (GER 8) again. She went directly downwind while I saw what looked like more breeze to the right. It was a long way right, but I got there and made good progress and was 4th at the bottom. The same tactic on the last beat paid off. The leaders had found less pressure on the left and I was now 2nd at the last windward mark with Detlef (GER 99) close behind. I held 2nd until just 3 boat lengths from the leeward mark when Detlef got the inside overlap and I finished 3rd.

We then had a long slow sail back to the dock. The sun was getting pretty low in the sky and the last of the breeze gave out while the fleet was still well out from shore. Paddling became the order of the day. My paddle broke 50 metres from the dock and it was 9 o'clock by the time we made it up the hill to the clubhouse. This time there was someone to tow the stragglers home before dark.

There was dinner laid on, and a German band playing. Massive dumplings and some meat on the bone. The bones were huge and my first thought was that these had to be neck bones from a giraffe, but it turned out to be beef.

Sunday was hot and calm. Not to be caught unprepared again, Eva suggested we rig the boat so we would just have to hoist sails for a quick departure. This didn't seem to please the wind gods and they refused to play. At noon the decision was made that there would not be any sailing that day. Time to put the boats away.

The awards ceremony was to be at 1 PM so people could get away in time. With a long drive ahead of us at 2 PM we decided that we couldn't wait any longer and had to leave. We said goodbye to the few sailors who were around the clubhouse and headed for Budapest. All in all it was a very enjoyable 5 days. The people were friendly and keen to help and I was really happy to be sailing a 2.4mR again.

A few personal notes: If the Race Committee had shortened course we could have completed the 3rd (abandoned) race and then we would have had another result to post. If all the races had been shorter we could have used what little wind there was to get more races in. I don't think there's much to gain from a race that takes over 45 minutes to complete in such light and fluky winds. The leaders just get further ahead than they already are and the trailers get further behind. It just stretches out. Or the wind dies and we all have to paddle home. A big thank you to Wilfried Klien and the other organizers. I look forward to the next opportunity to sail in such good company again.



Veranstalter: Wassersportgem. Altmühl-Brombachsee, Klasse: 2.4mR, Datum: 25.05.05 - 29.05.05

Pos	Sail #	Name	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Total
1	DEN 125	SÖRENSEN Bent	1	3	1	5
2	GER 99	MÜLLER-BÖLING Detlef	2	2	2	6
3	GER 1	KRÖGER Heiko	3	1	4	8
4	AUS 11	PEGAN Zoltan	6	4	3	13
5	GER 44	KLÖTZING Lasse	4	6	10	20
6	GER 8	VOß Martina	5	10	5	20
7	GER 47	CHELIUS Dr. Klaus	14	5	7	26
8	GER 17	REICHL Gesine	12	9	6	27
9	GER 13	REICHL Hans-Peter	7	11	9	27
10	GER 106	ECK Jürgen	9	15	8	32
11	GER 6	HEITMANN Hans Martin	8	14	11	33
12	GER 4	BUDWILL Dietmar	15	7	12	34
13	GER 7	KLEIN Wilfried	13	8	13	34
14	GER 2	FEDER Jörg	11	12	14	37
15	GER 9	KEMPF Michael	10	13	15	38