

Madness in Vass



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Vassiliki is renowned as a sailing and windsurfing Mecca, but now has the added draw of its annual Midsummer Madness watersports festival. We find out more...

ABOVE The 2009 Laser fleets included Greek champions as well as visiting sailors.

This year will see the fourth running ever 'Vassiliki Midsummer Madness' watersports festival, held on the Ionian island of Lefkas. The festival has established itself as the largest of its kind in Greece, thanks to its colourful blend of fun and competitive sailing, and is now attracting some seriously high-class international competition...

Vassiliki is famous for its strong afternoon winds and so it's not surprising that the event - which includes slalom, freestyle and speed windsurfing

ABOVE The Hobie 16 fleet waiting to race.



disciplines as well as open catamaran, Laser, open dinghy and yacht races - attracts a high standard of participation. For 2009, the third year of the 'Vassiliki Midsummer Madness' festival, the guests of honour included Sofia Bekatorou, Greek Olympic gold medallist in the 470 class at Athens in 2004.

But as well as being a serious sailing event the festival also delivers a spectacular display for visitors to the island, from an opening night featuring fireworks and a display of Greek folk dancing, to the mysteriously popular 'Miss Bikini' competition which, for some reason, attracts thousands of visitors to this small fishing village on the south of the island.

A class field

In a quality field of Olympic athletes and international champions it was local teams who dominated the 2009 festival, winning both the Laser fleets and Open Catamaran classes.

Jordanis Pashalides and Kostas Trigonis, current Tornado European champions but sailing here an F18 Hobie Tiger, put in an impressive six firsts out of

seven races. This left the previous year's winners Joe Bennett and Marko Reynolds (also in a Tiger) in second, and Tom Nottingham and Remco Fisher - a Dutch/Cypriot team on an F20 Hobie Fox - in third. Pashalides and Trigonis, with their 1000 Euro winning cheque, are now headed over to Weymouth to defend their 2007 and 2008 titles at the forthcoming Tornado Europeans, while Joe and Marko are determined to improve their result at the forthcoming Hobie Tiger Europeans in Lake Como, Italy.

In the Lasers Adonis Bouyououris, former Radial world champion and Greek national champion, topped the leaderboard, two points ahead of compatriot Alexis Katsios and a further two points ahead of Alastair Nichol from the UK in third. This class was far from incident-free with a number of the Greek team apparently disinclined to read the sailing instructions and disqualified in the first race for going through the start/finish line, whilst five of the top sailors were caught OCS in the last race of the first day. However, in the three races held in shifting wind conditions on the second day the Greek

PHOTO: ALL WILDWIND



“ In the Windsurfing Freestyle first place went to Max Rowe (UK) in his first ever competition win ”

champions' ability shone through and they came away with the prize money.

Virginia Kravarioti, Greek bronze medallist in the Yngling class at Qingdao, edged UK representative Eve Brinsley into second and her Yngling team mate Sofia Papadopoulou into third.

David Barker and David Mather took the honours in the Open Dinghy fleet on a Laser 2000 while the Hobie 16 fleet went to Stratos Kosmoglou and Pavlos Dimitriadis. A one-day yacht race around the small island of Arkoudi off the Lefkas coast saw victory go to Tony Dudley and his crew on the J/24 'Jungle', who narrowly squeezed out Neil McRoberts on his Dehler Optima 101 'Leona' with Bob Bennett of Felixstowe in third, also on a Dehler 101 ('Das Boot').

The windsurfing side of the event was hampered by lighter winds than are normal in Vassiliki at this time of year and sadly only a light wind Freestyle event was completed successfully, even though the Race Officers had courses set up for almost every wind direction ready in case a consistent breeze come through. In first place was Max Rowe

(UK) in his first ever competition win, with Andy (Bubble) Chambers in second and Chris Hartley, Club Vassiliki's beach manager in third. The Vassiliki Watersports Festival is one of the few such competitions in the world where amateurs can take on professionals for prize money.

Shoreside fiesta

The prizegiving for the sailing competition was a relatively staid affair after the excesses of the Miss Bikini competition but still featured the excellent UK band Wizard Sleeve on the Saturday night with prizes presented by Olympic gold medallist Sofia Bekatorou and her husband Andreas Kosmatopolou,



470 world champion and five-times Olympian, as well as by local dignitaries.

As well as the Miss Bikini competition, attended by 2,000 people on the Saturday night, the event included a Greek cultural night of folk dancing, a harp concert, a mountain bike race and a BMX competition - in an attempt to make BMX riding fit into a watersports festival the final round included riders doing their tricks from a huge ramp before splashing into the harbour!

At the opening ceremony six Greek Olympic sailors presented the local school with a gift of two RS Teras from event organisers and the major sponsor of the event, Wildwind Holidays.

Festival Organiser Simon Morgan said 'Although we are a little disappointed that the wind didn't fill in enough for a decent windsurfing event, the seven-race series for the sailors was superb, the evenings' social programme an absolute success and the feedback from everyone is that they will be returning next year with all of their friends.' ■

ABOVE LEFT Vassiliki is a renowned windsurfing destination and the watersports festival includes events like slalom and freestyle.

ABOVE The busy waterfront with sailing, windsurfing and social events providing great entertainment.

BELOW TOP Greek Olympic sailors Jordanis Pashalides and Kostas Trigonis won the 2009 Open Catamaran class.

BELOW LEFT Another popular highlight of the event is the 'Miss Bikini' contest.

BELOW RIGHT The 'Midsummer Madness' party kicks off with a traditional Greek night.

FANCY SOME 2010 MADNESS?

The fourth Vassiliki Watersports Festival will be held from June 11-13, 2010. Over the three days of festivities visitors can take part or watch a huge variety of events both on and off the water including:

- EFPA (European Professional Windsurf Competition)
- Open windsurf slalom event
- Sailing regatta with Open Catamaran, Open Dinghy, Laser and Yacht classes
- Mountain bike racing
- BMX display
- Sponsors' parties
- Greek cultural and dancing night
- 'Miss Bikini' night and live bands
- And much more...

You can watch footage of the Vassiliki Watersports Festival on www.wildwind.co.uk/ww/video16.html

A fortnight's sailing holiday from June 6-20 starts from just £1079, with the chance to join in with the superb catamaran training on offer and then enter the Festival regatta. For more information call 0844 499 2898 or contact simon@wildwind.co.uk