



It's a smooth sailing for debut Shanghai Open

Ma Yue

The inaugural Shanghai Sailing Open concluded at Dishui Lake in Pudong's Lingang area last Sunday.

Chen Jiaming from Guangdong Province was the champion of the ILCA6 Open. She was followed by Santiago Villax Sampaio of Portugal, and Shanghai sailor Shang Zitong.

Shanghai Qilang sailing team overcame Olympic gold medalist Xu Lijia's team to win the J80 race.

The three-day event attracted 35 ILCA6 boats and 25 J80 boats. The 300 racers included professionals and amateurs, locals and foreigners.

Despite her Olympic glory, Shanghai sailboat racer Xu was a new hand in the J80 competition.

Xu made a great contribution in the promotion of sailing in China when she won a bronze medal in the women's Laser Radial class at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. She then pocketed a gold medal in the same event at the 2012 London Games.

"The one-design class is my strong suit," Xu told Shanghai Daily.

"As for the big-boat multimember competition, I'm also a learner. Sailing is a popular sport in many foreign countries. China has developed its Olympic-level sailing events over the years, but there are still some 90 percent of sailing fields for domestic sailors to explore.

"The one-design class has become difficult for me given the injuries I picked



Xu Lijia and her team takes part in the J80 competition. — IC

up during the professional career. But I'm good enough to become a helmsman in the J80 competition. I want to lead my team and other sailing fans to explore and fill the blank in the big-boat category."

Xu's team included former world champion sailor Jim Johnstone, as well as young members with non-professional backgrounds. "Our goal is to gradually build an all-Chinese team to compete on the international stage in the future," said Xu.

Seventeen-year-old Huang Hongyi was the youngest participant in the J80, having practiced sailing at a local club for more than six years.

"When you encounter 20-knot winds and 1-meter-high waves for the first time, you will inevitably be scared," he said. "But when returning safely, you



Thirty-five boats took part in the one-design class of ILCA6. — Dong Jun

will feel more of an accomplishment in challenging yourself."

Huang said his father, who accompanies him for training, has been very supportive, considering sailing a good way for Huang to release pressure from study and seek a balance in life.

According to the Shanghai Water Sports Center, from 2004 to 2020, the number of sailing and windsurfing clubs in the city increased from one to more than 15. The Shanghai Sailing and Windsurfing Association was established in 2021.

Some foreigners working in Shanghai have joined local clubs to practice their beloved sport. Club leagues were also launched, involving both teenagers and adults.

Former Chinese national sailing team coach Jon Emmett from Britain took

part in the ILCA6 Open and finished fifth.

"Many years ago, only Dianshan Lake could be used for sailing training," he said. "Now, many lakes in Shanghai have opened to the sport.

"Professional athletes usually go overseas for high-level competitions. With the introduction of the Shanghai Sailing Open, they can exchange skills with international counterparts at home."

As the city's third self-developed sports competition after the Shanghai Marathon and the Shanghai River Regatta, the inaugural Shanghai Sailing Open combines sports, culture and tourism. On the eve of the first race day, a symphony orchestra was staged at Lingang, during which the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra presented a medley of classics.