



## Sailmaker Battle Heats Up at U.S. Nationals

DETROIT, September 20, 2007 - Over twenty race teams hit the waters of the Detroit River today as crews prepared for what will likely be the most competitive U.S. National Championships ever seen in the Melges 24 Class. Both on the water and in the staging area, racers were sweating in the 85-degree heat, grateful that the organizers had opened up the weigh-in scales early this morning.

80 sailors gathered at the riverfront behind Bayview Yacht Club to hear sailmaker and current World Champion Dave Ullman deliver a lively seminar about getting the most out of the rig and sails of this hot sportboat. After more than 90 minutes of discussion, the teams boarded their boats and headed out for 3 hours of short race drills in 5 to 7 knots of breeze from the East. The sight of almost two dozen of the thoroughbred race boats was enough to stop passing powerboats in their tracks, while Melges crews concentrated on boatspeed and the coaching tips that Ullman gave from a crash boat driven by clinic sponsor John Woodruff (**Latis Yachting**), sometimes following only inches from their sterns. As if Dave's coaching wasn't enough, Luiz Kahl (**Yachtscoring.com**) drove builder and former World Champ Harry Melges III around in his own RIB, offering the competitors tips that even Ullman might not have known.

Title Sponsor **Audi of America** got into the action as well, lining the parking lot with their latest sports and luxury vehicles. Sailors who weren't practicing were lured to the glossy carbon fiber that girdled the two-seat, mid-engine Audi R8. The other popular vehicle with Melges racers was the Audi Q7 - which would tow something like a Melges 24 in serious style. Audi has invited every competitor to test drive their offerings - something that more than a few will find time for.

Everything about the Melges 24 screams performance. The class continually attracts some of the most talented sailors on the planet, all of whom are in perpetual search of an extra tenth of a knot of boatspeed - through technique, fitness, boat prep, and hardware. This competitive drive brings out the best - not only in sailors, but in sailmakers, who have brought out the big guns for this event. After just a few short years building sails for top teams, Ullman's signature white Dacron mainsails have proven their place in the class. While many top teams now race with Ullman Sails, Dave has his own secret weapon in his quiver - the same exotic Cuben Fibre mainsail that won him the world championship in Santa Cruz.

Quantum Sail Design's introduction of the Fusion M sail has helped their results significantly over the past three years, with the Q logo figuring prominently in some of the top regional programs, including Detroit Chuck Holzman's blisteringly fast *Flyer*, helmed by Bora Gulari, and Steve Kopf's *Blur*, from Patriot's Point, South Carolina. Quantum has recently made inroads in Scandinavia as well, and the young but intense Norwegian Melges 24 class is watching this event with great interest.

One of the event's big surprises has been the entry of Doyle Detroit into the Melges 24 class, with new upwind sails that showed blinding speed today. Doyle's spinnaker design, optimized by gifted Head Sail Designer Richard Bouzaid was equally quick. Only one team is carrying Doyles, and that's Grosse Pointe Park native Nathan Hollerbach, helming for Hans Brieden aboard *Zig Zag*. Though optimistic, Nate was guarded when asked about his stellar performance in Thursday's light-air practice. He said, "Let's just hope that they're that fast tomorrow!"

Despite the inroads that these sailmakers have made in the class recently, the dominant Melges 24 sail designs still come from the talented designers at North Sails. Class guru, designer par excellence, and winner of the first (and second) Melges 24 World Championship Vince Brun is in attendance, helming class newcomer Peter Schumaker's *Marianne*. Along with North stalwarts Brian Porter (*Full Throttle*), Simon Strauss (*Team Gill*) and Marc Hollerbach (*Fu*), Brun hopes to show off the speed of the latest designs from North. Regardless of the conditions, it will not be easy for anyone to dominate this all-star event.

### **ULLMAN, HARDESTY, PORTER FAVORITES**

Despite the overabundance of past champions who will be on the line tomorrow, it's hard to imagine a top 3 that doesn't include Dave Ullman. With countless hours of racing, practicing and tuning over the past three years, Dave may be one of the most experienced Melges 24 racers on the planet today. His total willingness to share his secrets with every other team is a bonus, but once the gun goes off, Dave will be looking for a solid victory. *Lightwave's* Bill Hardesty has the raw talent to walk away a champion, and he's increased his chances considerably by joining forces with speed wizard Brian Hutchinson - a World Champion himself. Rounding out the top 3 most likely winners is Lake Geneva's Brian Porter - with Melges Performance Sailboats President Harry Melges III and VP Andy Burdick aboard, Porter will be blazing up the course. While any of these three teams has a substantial likelihood of being crowned 2007 Audi Melges 24 U.S. National Championship, there are at least four more teams that have a good shot at this coveted title. Of one thing there is no doubt: The 2007 Audi Melges 24 U.S. National Championship will be one to remember for a long, long time.

### **About Audi of America, Inc.**

**Audi** offers a line of premium vehicles through a network of 270 dealers including the Audi A3 compact; the sporty A4 sedan, Avant and Cabriolet models; the high performance S4 sedan, Avant and Cabriolet models; the high-revving RS 4 sports sedan and Cabriolet (November 2007 launch); the all-new S5 coupe (November 2007 launch) with 354 hp; the design-leading A6 sedan and Avant; the V10-powered high performance S6 sedan; the Audi Q7 performance SUV; the new all-aluminum Audi A8; the S8 with V10 power; the all-new 2008 TT Coupe and Roadster models; and the all-new all-aluminum R8, one of the most exclusive sports cars in the world. More information is available at [www.audiusa.com](http://www.audiusa.com).

### **About Barefoot Cellars Wines**

For over 20 years, Sonoma-based **Barefoot Cellars Wines** have received critical acclaim for their popular wines. Barefoot is a proud Sponsor/Partner of the championship and their Gold-Medal winning wines will be available throughout the event. More information on **Barefoot Cellars Wines** is available at [www.barefootwine.com](http://www.barefootwine.com).

### **About the 2007 Audi Melges 24 U.S. National Championship**

The 2007 Audi Melges 24 U.S. National Championship is hosted by **Bayview Yacht Club**, with the

support of Sponsor/Partners **Audi of America, Inc.**, the **Detroit-Area Audi Metro Dealers**, **Barefoot Wines**, **Yachtscoring.com**, **Latis Yachting Solutions**, the **Detroit Medical Center's Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan**, **Rock City Marine**, **Tim Wilkes Photography**, **Penalty Box Productions**, **RejeX by Corrosion Technologies**, **News Talk 760 WJR**, **West Marine**, and **Moosejaw**.

The **Melges 24** is the most unique one-design sportboat in the world, and one of the fastest-growing one-design race classes in the world. More information on the **U.S. Melges 24 Class** is available at [www.usmelges24.com](http://www.usmelges24.com). The Midwest Region's home page is [www.melges24racing.com](http://www.melges24racing.com). Check the official website for daily reports, pictures, and exciting video from the course at [www.melges24racing.com/nationals](http://www.melges24racing.com/nationals). Media personnel interested in more information or joining the official press boat can register at [www.melges24racing.com/nationals/press.asp](http://www.melges24racing.com/nationals/press.asp).

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