



Record Setting Fleet to Vie for National Championship

DETROIT, September 14, 2007 – In just over a week, some sixty Melges 24 skippers and crews will hit the waters of Lake St. Clair to decide who will be crowned the Audi 2007 U.S. National Champion. With 56 entries received to date, and up to 8 more expected, this will be the largest U.S. Nationals in the 14 year history of the class – confirming the health of this ultra-competitive, high-octane One Design class.

U.S. Melges 24 Class President Scott Gregory and his Georgia-based *Team Satisfaction* were initially unable to make it to Bayview Yacht Club for the championship, but when the entry list hit 40 boats, they cleared their schedules. “We just couldn’t miss an event like this up in Detroit,” Scott said. “Those guys really get it – there are so many good sailors in the Detroit fleet, and they are the most enthusiastic group in the country. They sail hard, they party hard, and they’re always helping others improve. We can’t wait to get out there and mix it up.”

Gregory and his team will have plenty of company. Melges 24 events consistently draw some of the world’s best sailors, and this one is no exception. World Champion Dave Ullman, helming for Scott Holmgren on *Rosebud*, is clearly the favorite – but his challengers include some of the best in the business. Ullman’s biggest obstacle is likely to be current North American Champion Brian Porter and his *Full Throttle* team. Porter enlisted the help of two close friends from Lake Geneva to see if he can dethrone the legendary Ullman; Melges Performance Sailboats President Harry Melges III and VP Andy Burdick – both World Champs in the Melges 24. *Full Throttle* was only seconds away from becoming the World Champion in Santa Cruz this past May when, on the final leg of the final race, a brutal gust of wind knocked her on her side, mast in the water. Ullman’s crew immediately dropped their spinnaker, giving them the control they needed to pass the disabled Porter and win the championship.

Star-studded Fleet Includes World, National, North American Champs

Other top sailors contending for the title of U.S. Champion include dozens of past Melges 24 champions at all levels. Two-time World Champion Vince Brun will be on the course after a hiatus from the class, and other competitors of note include Bill Hardesty, John Pollard, Simon Strauss, Argyle Campbell, Mark Ivey, Michael Miller, Erik Champain, and Bora Gulari. Every one of these racers has the proven ability of a champion, as they’ve shown in everything from the Olympic 470 to the Transpac52.

Typical September winds on the lake are gusty and shifty, and local knowledge could prove to be the key to a solid result. Local stars include up-and-coming match racer Nate Hollerbach, who heads off to Bermuda in a few weeks for one of the premier match racing events in the world – the Gold Cup. Hollerbach is honing his skills on the helm of *Zig Zag*, although he’ll have some very motivated opponents on the water: Squaring up against Nate are his father, Marc and brother, Adam aboard *Fu*.

Penalty Box Productions to Produce Official National Championship DVD

Event Chairman Paul Hulsey was pleased to announce yesterday that he had retained high-performance race filmmaker Peter Crawford's **Penalty Box Productions** to film the event. "With this many competitors, and the likelihood of solid breeze, it would be horrible to miss out on high quality video coverage," Hulsey said. Crawford, a lifelong scow and iceboat sailor, has an eye for fast racing machines, as he proved with amazing footage from the windy 2007 Worlds in Santa Cruz. Each team will receive a short DVD of the event, and interested parties can pre-order a full-length DVD that includes both the Worlds and National Championship footage at event registration or on the web at www.penaltyboxproductions.com.

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.

About Penalty Box Productions

Located in Minneapolis with roots reaching all the way to Hollywood, **Penalty Box Production** is making its presence known throughout the sailing world. Peter Crawford heads up a team of film and video professionals with decades of experience shooting hard and soft-water sailing on film. "I've been racing for over 30 years - and as a high-performance sailor, I know what all sailors want to see: Great action footage and great music!" See for yourself at <http://www.penaltyboxproductions.com>.

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

The Audi 2007 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**, and **Penalty Box Productions**.

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. The Midwest Region's home page is www.melges24racing.com.

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