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The 2010 SEIKO 49er Speed Challenge. A new record is set - 24.1 knots!

The 2010 'Sail for Gold' regatta in Weymouth, England was the last opportunity of this year for the 49er sailing community to attempt to win the SEIKO 49er Speed Challenge, and it was an opportunity that was gleefully accepted by the Australian team of Will and Sam Phillips who not only set the fastest speed of the year (24.1 knots) but also the fastest ever recorded in the three years of the Speed Challenge.



Sam (left) and Will Phillips broke the 49er speed record with a top speed of 24.1 knots.

During 2010, the International 49er Class organized the Speed Challenge at four events in Palma, Spain, in Hyeres, France, in Gdynia, Poland and, most recently, at Weymouth. Before the Weymouth event, the fastest speed of the year (21.9 knots) had been set by Lauri Lehtinen and Kalle Bask of Finland, with the Brazilian team of Andre Fonseca and Marco Graef just behind on 21.8 knots. These speeds had been set in Poland during the European Championships but proved no match for the Phillips brothers whose remarkable new record speed was set on their very first attempt.

24.1 knots is quite a speed. It converts to 44.6 kph or 27.7 mph and to see a two-man skiff travelling at such a pace is quite a sight, as you can see at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJEBnYwLzbQ&NR=1>

As winners, Will and Sam collected the \$1,500 prize and a bonus of a further \$1,500 for setting the fastest speed ever recorded in the Speed Challenge, comfortably beating the previous best, set in 2009, of 21.6 knots.



This SEIKO Velatura Yachting Timer presented to the winners of the Speed Challenge. The brothers went straight back to Australia after the event, and are wearing them proudly 'down under'!

In fact, all three 2010 winners beat the fastest 2009 speed (21.6 knots) which, in turn, was faster than the top speed inaugural Speed Challenge in 2008, a mere 19.4 knots. Maybe the 49er sailors are getting better every year!

A runner-up prize of \$1,000 was awarded to the Finnish team of Lehtinen and Bask whose times from Gdynia, Poland was not bettered by any other contestant. The Brazilians Fonseca and Graef were placed third and also received a \$1,000 prize. In collecting his award, Will Phillips said:

"We hit the 24 k just off the breakwater in the flat water, it was a big gust of maybe 25 knots. We had three or four runs from the same spot, we hit the 24 on the first run, I think the wind was dropping so we were pretty lucky! Sam and I would like to thank SEIKO for their award, their partnership with the 49er class is a great thing."

Details of the SEIKO Speed Challenge 2010 are also available on the official website of the International 49er Class, www.49er.org.

The stories of the SEIKO Speed Challenge in the previous years can be referred at:
http://www.seikowatches.com/press/2009/oct_rls0910-01.html
http://www.seikowatches.com/press/2008/sep_rls0809-01.html

Note: The speeds are calculated by the Velocitek 'Speed Puck' device, recognized worldwide as one of the very best sailing aids. The speeds were 10-second averages.