

Final Preparations Complete

Qingdao China - August 6, 2008 - Just a quick note to say hi to everyone and let you all know that everything is going very well here. We got our boats, training has been going well, measurement was quick and easy, and the opening ceremony is approaching very quickly.

Firstly, we got our boats. The system is called the boat draw in which we all are randomly given a boat, so everything is fair and square. The boat draw was at 10 am on the morning of July 28. On representative from each class (Laser, Radial, RS X men and women) were supposed to be there. Andrew Campbell, Andrew's coach Bill Ward, team leader Dean Brenner and I all gathered in a large room with reps from every other country. At the front of the room there was a lottery machine. There were enough balls for the number of boats in each class. Of course they drew for the RS:X first, which meant we had to sit for a while, but the process was quite amusing. They had the countries listed in alphabetical order on a computer screen, and as numbers came up, they were assigned to a the country on screen.

Eventually, they got to the Laser classes, and started with the men's fleet. Because USA was the last country on the alphabetical list, mine was the last and only remaining number be drawn. However, I ended up with a good number…number 12. The entertaining part of the whole experience was the ooowing and aaaaaring when particular numbers came out given their meanings…for example, in China, 3 is a very lucky number, but 4 means death…so does 44 mean double death?...you catch my drift. It was an easy way to entertain ourselves for an hour.

After the boat draw, we had to wait until 2:00 pm until we could actually pick up our boats. Faced with a mad rush of everyone at 2:00pm, they had to work out a system that would make it go smoothly. This one worked in my favor. Luckily, they stated with boat 1 and worked up to 70…good thing I was number 12! We received all of our equipment except for our lines and tillers, which we brought ourselves. Our sails were handed out during measurement. I got my boat and stated rigging it so I could head out for a sail. When I pulled my daggerboard out, it was a bit disappointing to find out that it was bent on the bottom. Andrew had the same problem (only a lot worse). We waited until they had finished distributing all of the boats, and we headed back over to show them our boards and to get new, straighter ones. In doing this, we started a trend and it seemed like everyone had some sort of problem with their equipment from blades up to battens. Anyway, by about 4:30 pm I was fully rigged and ready to hit the water for the first time. Coach Luther Carpenter and I headed out for about an hour session just to blow the cobwebs away.

Since then and now, I have sailed everyday save two. One day was a scheduled day off. The other one was due to too much wind. It actually wasn't that windy, but it was only the third day we had our equipment and I didn't want to bend or break my mast. Because we are not allowed to practice with our own masts, I don't think any Lasers went out that day for the same reason. To break-in a Laser mast in properly, takes a couple of days of light to medium winds before you can take it out in big breeze.

I managed to move up my measurement time from August 7, to August 4, which allowed me to get my sail earlier and not have to worry about getting through it all. The measurement process for the Laser class is quite simple really. Because all of our equipment is supplied except our lines, the measurer looks at everything to make sure we didn't do

anything illegal to it (like sanding the blades) and signs each piece. Once all the parts are signed, we rig up so he can check that our rigging is within the class rules and then signs us off. It was a quick process that took no more than 20 minutes unlike some other classes that can take three hours…that’s why we sail the laser

Finally, the opening ceremony is approaching quickly. I have one more day of sailing tomorrow and then 14 team members, Dean Brenner, and our Boatwright Donnie Brenner hop on a plane early the next morning to head up to Beijing. I’m very excited for the ceremony. I’m not allowed to take pictures and post them, so be sure to watch it on TV (NBC) on the morning of the 8th and look for me…I’ll try to find the camera and wave.

You’ll notice some changes in the content of my reports for the next three weeks and where they are located on my website. To comply with International Olympic Committee regulations designed to protect its sponsors’ interests, my reports are appearing here on my special Qingdao Olympic Blog. The URL for the page is <http://www.annatunnicliffe.com/content/view/185/112/>. There is also be a link from the home page of my website. The blog page will include hotlinks to official results and competition photos

Sail hard

Anna