



Toronto's Vincere yacht beats Holland's Team Heritage for Canada's Cup

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Josh Berenter | The Grand Rapids Press

By

HOLLAND -- When Ada resident Bob Hughes helped win the Canada's Cup in 2007, he dreamed of defending and winning it again in his home state.

But Sunday, Hughes' dream came to an end as Toronto's Vincere defeated Hughes and Holland's Team Heritage.

Hughes shared a hug and a tear with Macatawa Bay Yacht Club on-shore committee co-chair Mary DeVries at the closing ceremonies after the loss. Hughes said he was incredibly disappointed he couldn't do more to keep the cup in the United States.

"It was so hard to get it here, and the goal was to make it a bigger and better event and to defend it. At the end of the day, we lost," Hughes said. "I'm proud to be a part of the club and event, but not proud to have lost. It really, really hurts right now."

Team Heritage lost two of three regattas Sunday, losing the Canada's Cup 5-3 to Vincere of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club in the best-of-nine series. But MBYC co-chair Robert De Jong said the real winner from the event was the sport of sailing and the MBYC.

"This was a dream come true for us to be able to share what this competition is about. We never dreamt we would have so much support and so much interest like we had this week," De Jong said. "This was fantastic. Everybody has been very gracious, and we're really pleased to be able to share the sport of sailing to so many people."

It was the first time since 2003 a Canadian team has won the Canada's Cup, regarded as one of the world's most prestigious sailing races.

After the win, RCYC representative David Matheson grinned from ear to ear adorning a championship blazer with the Canada's Cup insignia, similar to the green jacket given to the champion of golf's Masters tournament.

"This was awesome for us. We were truly the underdogs, no question about it. We put the team together in a very short time and we're very proud to bring the cup back to Toronto," Matheson said. "I have great praise for all of these guys. They really stepped up and ran the ship."

CANADA'S CUP

What: Canada's Team Vincere defeated America's Team Heritage 5-3 in the best-of-9 series.

Who: Heritage team helmsman—Bob Hughes, 48, of Ada; Vincere team helmsman—Oskar Johansson, 34, of Toronto

History: First win for Canadian team since 2003

Lowdown: Vincere will keep the cup for at least two years, when an American team challenges it to a match, likely at Royal Canadian Yacht Club in Toronto



Enlarge

Katy Batdorff | The Grand Rapids Press

The trophy for the winner of the Canada's Cup. (Katy Batdorff | The Grand Rapids Press)

Canada's Cup at Macatawa Bay Yacht Club gallery (9 photos)

After soaking in the victory, drinking champagne out of the silver trophy, Matheson was quick to give praise to MBYC, saying it's the best Canada's Cup he has seen.

"The people here did a first-class job. To see the spirit and the pride of the people here was just wonderful," Matheson said. "They couldn't have been more gracious. This area is a jewel. It's just outstanding."

Team Heritage kept the match close all week. It won the opening regatta, but lost the ensuing two races Friday. The teams split two races Saturday, and the Americans lost two of three Sunday.

Vincere won the final race by only two seconds, and Canada's Cup chief empire Henry Menin said both teams raced better than any match he has seen.

"The talent on board for both teams was just superb. It was a pleasure to watch," Menin said. "I was marveling at how well these guys were maneuvering through the water. The Canadians and the Americans should both be very proud of what they did. It was like a Frazier-Ali match."

Hughes said despite the loss, he wouldn't trade his team members for anyone, and he was proud of their accomplishments and the exposure they brought to his club and the sport.

"Anytime you can bring this kind of attention to the sport, that's a really good thing. Hopefully some of the people that saw this will compete in the cup in 15 or 20 years," Hughes said. "The club and the supporters did an amazing job putting on such a great event. My hope is that, going forward, the success of this event will create some momentum. I hope people see how this event and this sport can grow when it's done the right way."

In true spirit of the camaraderie of the event, the teams shared gifts, praises, champagne toasts and pitchers of beer during the event's closing ceremonies.

Hughes said that's the way it should be.

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