

Team Heritage downed in Canada's Cup final, Cup leaving Macatawa Bay Yacht Club

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Macatawa — Team Heritage pushed its sailing opponent from Canada hard on the final day of the Canada's Cup match race sailing event Sunday, but Team Vincere found more thrust, winning two out of three races to claim the 23rd rendition of the prestigious event held for the first time in West Michigan.

"The more pressure we put on them the harder they raced," said Team Heritage helmsman Bob Hughes of Ada. "As a team we talked about having the kind of day we've had for the last two weeks. We trained hard and thought if we could just keep sailing we'd make our way to the next race.

Team Vincere of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club of Toronto, Canada, won race eight of the possible nine-race competition by 24 seconds and wrapped up the 5-3 win over Team Heritage of Macatawa Bay Yacht Club of Holland. The Canada's Cup trophy returns to the Royal Canadian Yacht Club in Toronto where it will solicit a future challenge from sailing teams in the U.S.

Team Vincere had a 3-2 race lead heading into the final day of the competition. The first team to win five races would claim the cherished sterling silver trophy Tiffany's created in 1898.

The first race of the day began in rough seas and a good breeze. The lake was so choppy that a jam-packed 86-foot Berger spectator boat was forced to return to dock to replace a broken window and big mess caused by a shifting cooler on board.

Vincere rounded the initial mark first. Vincere increased its lead slightly, rounding the second mark approximately seven seconds ahead of Heritage. Vincere had a strong upwind leg, increasing the gap to 25 seconds at the third mark. Heritage surged downwind on the final leg, almost catching Vincere at the finish line, finishing two seconds back. Vincere expanded its lead to 4-2, needing just one more win to capture the championship.

Heritage had a strong start in the second race, edging Vincere at the first mark by one boat length and gained more ground to lead by four boat lengths at the second mark. Heritage protected its lead, covering Vincere in the final to take the race by 34 seconds to narrow the overall margin to 4-3.

Having replaced a damaged jib halyard, Vincere started with a slight lead at the first mark in the third race. Both boats were still close together at the downwind mark. Vincere had a strong upwind leg, leading by approximately 30 seconds at the third mark, which proved to be too big a deficit for Heritage to make up. Vincere won the final race by 24 seconds.

"The team worked so hard," said Vincere tactician Andy Horton. "We knew we'd probably lose one. It's very hard to win them all. It was a great series. Every race could have gone the other way. We were always right at the marks together."

Robert De Jong, co-chair of the race with David Sligh, said the successful Canada Cup event here will solidify West Michigan's and the MBYC's image as a prime competitive sailing venue.

"We had so much local support and interest in this," De Jong said. "Even today we had 15 to 20 spectator boats on a very rough day. We've had around 50 a day all the way through. The hope is that people here see what we have in this sport. You don't have to be wealthy to take part in it and enjoy it."

The U.S. maintains a 13-10 lead all-time in Canadian Cup competition.

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