

# PHUKET'S INAUGURAL RACE WEEK

When I heard that Phuket was to get another regatta like the King's Cup, I thought I would have to check it out. This one was to be organised locally by Andy Dowden and Gren Fordham from Image Asia.

The organisers wanted to have racing visible to the public and for that reason the Evason Resort in Rawai was approached to make this possible. They agreed and the location couldn't have been better. The first major resort built on Phuket, the Evason Resort has a bar and restaurant right on the water's edge so you can wine, dine and watch all that yacht thingy going on just off the coast.

Around 30 entries were anticipated for the

event, but due to work commitments, rigging failure and some fluky wind conditions for the Langkawi-based yachts, 19 boats in four classes started the week. The four classes were IRCQ, Club, Racing and Multihull class.

The racing got off to a slow start on the first day with negligible wind and resulted in two of the classes failing to post a result. Parties were held each evening which suited our beach bound members. We could also catch up on the onboard events of the day.

The excitement and tension were tangible as the last day of racing got underway. With almost nothing separating the leaders in three classes, several boats saw an



*Andy Dowden and Gren Fordham were feeling quite pleased with how the event turned out.*

opportunity to clinch the series on the final day.

On equal points in Racing Class were Scott Duncanson's Securicor Som Tam Express and Stuart Harrison's Panic!; Al Boone's Blue Moon and Stewart Crow's Cinders in Club Class were also tied, while in IRC, there was just one point difference between Viroj Nualkhair's Octopussy and Mick Kealy's Minx.

The 23 representatives of the national and regional media on the water to see the final battle watched with bated breath as Duncanson crowded Harrison before the start to gain position, allowing Keith Moore's Skiff Asia Pla Loma and Mark Horwood's Image Asia Attitude to cross the line ahead of him.

"We had only one boat to beat to clinch the series," said Duncanson, "so position was everything."

Yendys, skippered by Richard Grimes with Malaysian owner Ahmad Farid on board, led around the top mark, but needed to get further ahead as Viroj Nualkhair's Octopussy and John Vause's Ruby Tuesday were close behind. The short windward-leeward course set by Race Officer John McLennan proved the ideal choice, as the breeze settled at 10 knots for most of the race, before peaking at 15 knots for the final downwind leg.

Saturday's conditions tested some crews seemingly lulled into a false sense of security after a week of unseasonable light winds. Sail handling errors and rig problems led to several dramas, including at least two broaches.

Commenting on the second of his two broaches that day, Image Asia Attitude's Mark Horwood said, "We'd thought we'd throw in a quick gybe and beat Panic! across the (finish) line.

