

Slick tactics at Big Boat series

By Michelle Slade

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Marin boats racing in the 43rd Rolex Big Boat Series are sitting pretty in first and second place after Day 2 of racing. The J/105 Blackhawk skippered by Scooter Simmons of Belvedere took two fifth places on Friday to sit in first in the highly competitive J/105 fleet. Also in the top 10 in the J/105 division is Aquavit (Novato) and Brick House (Tiburon).

Philippe Kahn (Belvedere) and crew aboard Melges 32 Pegasus 32 took two bullets to lead the division. Peter Stoneberg (Belvedere) sits in second place after taking two seconds on Shadow in the ID35 division. Frank Glassner of Tiburon on J-World sits in third place in the 9-strong J/120 division.

Aquavit skipper Tim Russell was thrilled with his crew's performance. "We took a first and a second. We had good starts on the right side of the line, we had good boat speed," Russell said. "The highlight was racing up the first beat in the second race, along the city front. The fleet was really tight and there were about seven of us duking it out. The breeze this year has been a lot more civilized but there's still two days to go."

Tim Ballard of San Rafael, aboard his Beneteau 40.7 Inspired, is in seventh place in the IRC C.

"We had an absolutely fabulous day," Ballard said. "We kept pace with the lead boats for the first time. The downer of the day was losing three places when we hit a hole right by the north tower of

the Golden Gate Bridge in Race 2. Big Boat it attracts serious racers not amateurs.

"We're doing our absolute all-out best yet we're in the middle of the fleet. When you're starting you know what the others on the line are thinking and there's not the chaos associated with more amateur racing. This is my 10th Big Boat and it's as good as it gets."

"Conditions are a little lighter this year and have provided for some more tactical racing," principal race officer John Craig said at day's end. "We're hoping that the breeze will establish itself so that we can send the large boats out under the gate. I'm pleased with this year's turnout for the regatta as we're at 113 boats, up 20 from last year."

Marin IJ Sat Sept 15, 2007