

You've got Questions?



# Mobility Cup 2006

By Kevin Rogers,  
Information Resources Coordinator



Left: Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan, founder of Disabled Sailing Association B.C. (DSA BC).



**S**ailing, to me represents the ultimate freedom. It is another activity that allows me to leave my wheelchair, and my worries behind. I love being in control, focusing only on my sailing skills, and enjoying the exhilarating feeling of the wind and waves in my face.

Last summer when I was visiting Vancouver for Access Challenge I learned that the Mobility Cup would be held there September 2006. With a dual passion for sailing and Vancouver, I decided without hesitation that I was going!

Mobility Cup is an international sailing regatta for people with physical disabilities. It was first organized in 1991 by Sam Sullivan, Vancouver's incumbent Mayor and founder of Disabled Sailing Association B.C. (DSA BC). DSA BC started in 1989 with a boat that had been donated to the Rick Hansen Man in Motion Foundation. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had given the boat to Rick during Expo 86. Since 1991 the Mobility Cup has been held in various cities across Canada stimulating the development of accessible sail-

ing programs in virtually every province.

The boats used for the program are 16' foot Martin sloops which can be equipped with assistive technology such as an autohelm, windlass or sip'n'puff. When equipped with these devices the boats can easily be sailed by virtually anyone regardless of the extent of his or her physical limitations. Just like anyone else, one's

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knowledge of sailing is the key factor.

Prior to the main event, a symposium was held at Jericho Beach Sailing Centre. This provided an opportunity to meet other sailors, learn how to establish a



Left to right: Duane Geddes Executive Director of Disabled Sailing Association, B.C., Silver Fleet winner Shelley Gauthier from Toronto, and Rene Dallaire co-presenting Coupe Dallaire.

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sailing club and attend lectures on racing strategies led by paralympian and four time winner of the Mobility Cup, Danny Mc Coy.

On September 11th, Mayor Sam Sullivan officiated at the opening ceremonies at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club. This year there were forty-two competitors from around the world including

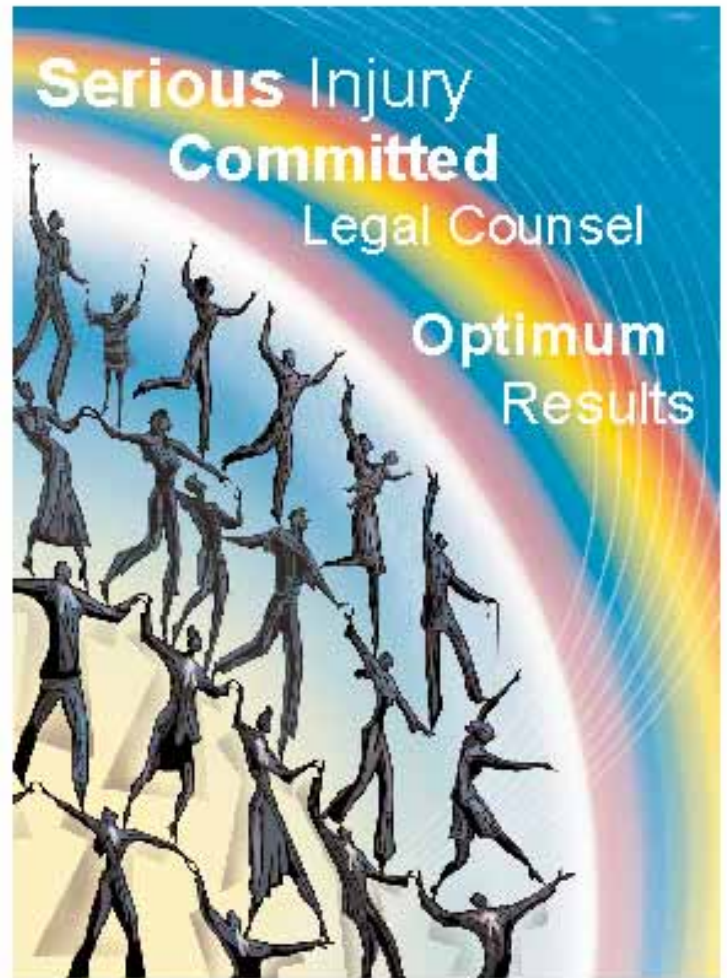
Australia, Canada, Hungary, New Zealand, U.K., and U.S.A. Depending on ones' sailing experience, competitors entered the Gold Fleet for experienced racers or the Silver Fleet for beginners or less experienced racers.

While having some sailing experience, but still being a freshman to racing, I elected to enter the Silver Fleet. Over the course of the next five days I learned more about sailing than I had sailing recreationally for five years. I was paired with my sailing partner, Ray Parsons, who has many years of racing experience, has a wonderful competitive spirit and is a personal friend of Don Martin (designer of the Martin 16). With an expert partner and my desire to win, I was confident I could finish first.

After colliding with a "mate" – Peter Magee, from down under, while vying for position and finishing nearly last in the first race, I was quickly humbled. It was readily apparent that I still had some skills to develop. After the first race I sought out my new Aussie friend, who I had "run into" earlier in the day. When I found him I noticed that he was getting acquainted with Alexander Keith so I did my best to nurture this relationship. A heartfelt apology for the violent crash and a few pints later, all was forgiven (save for my damage deposit).

In addition to the racing, coaching clinics were held for both the Gold and Silver fleets. These clinics were facilitated by experts like paralympian Bruce Millar who discussed racing strategies, penalties and Rights of Way. Attending these coaching clinics were extremely helpful, although doing so highlighted how much more I needed to learn about racing.

On the second day Mother Nature was not on our side. We had no wind at all, so the race was cancelled. The following day the winds picked-up, permitting us to enjoy a full day of competition. In the first race I surprised myself by finishing first. However, that was pure luck as, in the next two races I found myself finishing in the all too familiar spot at the end of the fleet. At least I managed to



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Far left: Kevin with Peter Magee, his new mate from down under, and sailing on English Bay.

avoid being hit or more importantly hitting someone else. After the second day we enjoyed a delicious roast beef dinner at the Yacht club and heard from several speakers including Mayor Sullivan who described the birth of DSA BC and Mobility Cup. He credited that experience as a training ground to learn about politics, preparing him for his role as Mayor.

The final day of Mobility Cup brought us fair skies and moderate winds. The Silver Fleet raced in the morning. The winners were Shelly Gautier from Toronto who had won the Silver Fleet, Katie Paialunga of Orleans Ontario finishing second, and Darryl Park of Kelowna B.C. coming in third. In the afternoon, the winner of the Gold Fleet was Rob Lawrence from Calgary Alberta, Marc Landry of Notre Dame de L'Il Perrot Quebec finished second and Brent Foote of Delta BC placed third. Prizes were awarded to the top five racers in each fleet.

*I came away from this event feeling a sense of renewed spirit. Mobility Cup is not just about the competition; it is about the interaction with fellow sailors and the camaraderie between kindred spirits with a shared passion.*

I'm sure I speak for all participants when I say how grateful we are to the organizers at DSA BC, the many volunteers, and generous sponsors who contributed to the success of Mobility Cup 2006.

I came away from this event feeling a sense of renewed spirit. Mobility Cup is not just about the competition; it is about the interaction with fellow sailors and the camaraderie between kindred spirits with a shared passion. This was my first experience at Mobility Cup, but definitely not my last. I look forward to attending next years event rumored to be in Ottawa. If you've thought about sailing and haven't tried it yet, ask yourself, what is holding you back? I hope sharing my experience will inspire you to "Get on Board."

If you are interested in sailing, look for an accessible sailing program by visiting [www.disabledsailing.on.ca](http://www.disabledsailing.on.ca). If you would like to start a sailing program in your community check out this website on how to go about it [www.ablesailnetwork.ca/](http://www.ablesailnetwork.ca/) or contact me at 1-877-422-1112 ext. 213.

Access Challenge can be contacted at [www.disabilityfoundation.org/bcmos/a\\_challg.htm](http://www.disabilityfoundation.org/bcmos/a_challg.htm). 