



Melges Performance Sailboats Partners with Asia Yacht Services to Debut Melges 20 in Hong Kong

Article by Sam Rogers - Continuing on the Melges 20 world tour, the latest stop for the new, exciting 20 foot sportboat was the city of Hong Kong where sailing is on the rise and the sailors are always hungry for the latest in racing innovation. The Melges 20 was welcomed with great anticipation at the local yacht clubs and if the excitement shown for this boat is any indication, it will be a regular fixture in the Hong Kong racing scene in the coming months.

Asia Yacht Services, which specializes in providing excellence in boating and sailing to the Hong Kong community, will add to its already exceptional line up of products with the inclusion of the Melges 20. With a casual, yet diligent and professional approach to boating, Asia Yacht Services will be an excellent ambassador for the Melges 20 and its growth in Hong Kong.

The first stop for the Melges 20 was the Hebe Haven Yacht Club where it was unloaded from a container with plenty of onlookers. The builder of the Melges 20, McConaghy Boats, is located just a few hours away, so the delivery was seamless and efficient. After a quick assembly, the Melges 20 was sailing off the waters of Sai Kung amidst the local fisherman with the mountains of Hong Kong in the background, a truly beautiful site. At the end of the day, the Melges 20 was put to rest at Marina Cove and the Hong Kong International Boat Show where it was cleaned up and put on display for Hong Kong's eager boating community.

Dubbed as the largest boat show in the region, the Hong Kong International Boat Show certainly offered the "best of the best" when it comes to boating in the far east. Despite being parked next to 100ft motor yachts and large cruising catamarans, the Melges 20 stole the show with its sleek lines and overall simple features. It was particularly appealing as it was pointed out that the novice sailors can now compete with the more experienced sailors while at the same time having the feel and excitement of a fast, agile sportboat. It did not take long to figure out by the expressions on the boat show attendees that the Melges 20 will be a major success in Hong Kong.

After spending two days at the Boat Show, the Melges 20 made a 17-mile journey down the coast into bustling Hong Kong Harbor and the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club where it would make preparations for the 2008 Loro Piana Around Hong Kong Island Race. This is easily the biggest yacht race in Hong Kong with over 200 participants taking place in this year's running. There were several grand prix yachts over 60 ft, TP 52s and a variety of 50 footers mixed together with Etchells, Dragons, Magic 25s and the Melges 20.

On its quick sail to the starting line, Melges 20 turned a lot of heads as many sailors from Hong Kong had not seen the latest product from Melges Performance Sailboats. Starting with larger sportboats like Magic 25s and Longzte Premiers, the Melges 20 had its work cut out for it. Just off the starting line, it was clear the Melges 20 was not to be taken lightly as it outperformed many of the Magics and a few of the Longztes. Sailing amidst massive skyscrapers and the city of Hong Kong in the background, it held its own as the fleet turned the corner into the South China Sea. With the breeze hovering around 4-6 kts, the Melges 20 snaked through many of the boats in its own fleet while over taking 30, 40 and 50 footers which required a bit more breeze. Each time the Melges 20 made a pass, there were many fingers pointed with audible expressions of "what kind of boat is that?" being heard.

About two-thirds the way around the Island of Hong Kong, the race course was shortened due to lack of wind. Despite being the smallest boat in its division, the Melges 20 finished in the top right alongside the larger boats it had started with. After a brief tow, the Melges 20 headed back into Hong Kong Harbor and the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club where it was prominently put on display for the large group of sailors to grab a view.

Based around one of the largest cities in the world, the sailing community in Hong Kong has grown rapidly over the past few years as they have begun to embrace boating and sailing with great enthusiasm. With the addition of the Melges 20 to the sailing landscape in Hong Kong, the local sailors now have a boat that can include a wide variety of sailors, while at the same time providing them with the experience of competing in a boat that is widely recognized around the world. The Melges 20 stormed into Hong Kong, just the latest stop for this pocket-sized sportboat in its already successful world tour.

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