

[Brendan Casey steals SOF Hyeres week after full-on medal race](#)

[Sailing World Cup 2012](#)

Brendan Casey (AUS) picked up his first ever ISAF Sailing World Cup win in the best possible way, by dominating and winning the medal race at the Semaine Olympique Française in the rough and windy waters off Hyeres to snatch the title at the last moment. Former leader Rafa Trujillo (ESP) could only finish seventh to drop to second overall, while a late charge from Vasilij Zbogor (SLO) gave him the bronze.

It has been a hard week in Hyeres and the venue has thrown its toughest conditions at the relatively small Finn fleet. Starting with strong winds, with day three abandoned when it got too extreme, day four was a complete contrast with light winds and shifty, tricky winds. The week ended with very strong winds again with only one race possible on Thursday, before Friday's epic medal race. Several classes were abandoned on shore.

Deniss Karpak (EST) opened the week with three race wins and a second place in strong winds, to build a commanding lead. However this started to fall apart in the light wind races on Wednesday, when a first and a second let Rafa Trujillo (ESP) into the lead. Trujillo held onto the lead on Thursday's single very windy race, which was won by Brendan Casey (AUS), while a second for Karpak kept in him the silver medal position.

Going into the medal race Trujillo had a scant two point lead over Karpak with Casey and Vasilij Zbogor (SLO) still in with a chance at the gold. The conditions were verging on the extreme, with winds touching 30 knots. Casey started well, headed to the left and after passing Gasper Vincec (SLO) on the first downwind was never really threatened. He extended for a comfortable



win, with Eduard Skorniyakov (RUS) crossing in second and Zbogar third.

Sitting no higher than third place all week, Casey stole the regatta by winning the last two races in the strongest winds of the week. His win also means he has met the qualification criteria for the Olympics. He said, "I have been trying to be selected for the Olympic Games for many years and I have had many disappointments. I can't say how excited I am!"

Zbogar has also won his Olympic selection trials over Gasper Vincec (SLO), who capsized and finally finished ninth.

Early regatta leader Karpak commented, "I made a lot of mistakes in the medal race, but anyway it was a good training week and this regatta is not so important for me. But it was my best ever result in Hyeres." Meanwhile, a clearly disappointed Trujillo had almost done enough to win, but Alexey Selivanov (RUS) screamed across the finish line just metres ahead of the Olympic silver medalist to deny Trujillo the title by just 0.4 points.

The low numbers sailing here is evidence of the busy early season, with many sailors training elsewhere or in Weymouth in the run up to the JP Morgan Asset Management Falmouth Finn Festival, which starts next weekend with the UK National Championships, followed by the Finn Gold Cup a week later. It will be the first time this year that all the top sailors in the Finn fleet will be racing together and is the first of the major showdowns before the Summer Olympics.

Final results (Medal race position in brackets)

- 1 AUS 1 Brendan Casey 28.6 (1)
- 2 ESP 100 Rafael Trujillo 29 (7)
- 3 SLO 573 Vasilij Zbogar 34 (3)
- 4 EST 2 Deniss Karpak 37 (10)
- 5 NZL 1 Dan Slater 47.2 (5)
- 6 RUS 9 Eduard Skorniyakov 62 ((2)
- 7 SLO 5 Gasper Vincec 62 (9)
- 8 CZE 1 Michael Maier 73 (4)
- 9 NZL 8 Matt Coutts 77 (8)
- 10 RUS 1 Alexey Selivanov 78 (6)

Pics: Thom Touw

Full results here: <http://sof.ffvoile.net/results/finn.htm>

More photos here:

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150703557722634.401915.110408332633&type=1>