

Closing of the 2023 French Downwind Foil Open

After three days of intense competition, it's time to reflect on the French Downwind Foil Open in Crozon. If we had to choose two words to characterize this event, they would be "motivation" and "commitment." These words encapsulate the determination of the international riders who descended upon Brittany for this premier event. In just a few short weeks, the foiling world was set alight by this competition, drawing participation from over twelve nations and some of the world's finest riders.

Prelude to the competition...

Although the races were slated for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, many foreign champions arrived in Crozon by Monday. This provided them an opportunity to acclimate to local conditions, scout the surrounding spots, and relish Breton gastronomy. Enjoying galettes is not an everyday occurrence, especially if you hail from Hawaii or Australia! Luckily, the weather granted them two days to train and fine-tune their equipment in anticipation of the Open.

Inspiring Meeting with the Youth

Students from Jeanne d'Arc Middle School in Crozon were privileged to interact with these exceptional athletes. This encounter was a treasure trove of insights, especially for those students with a keen interest in water sports. They were introduced to SUP Foil and its equipment. The engagement underscored the significance of being multilingual to facilitate communication and learn from champions. Moreover, it spurred them to embrace foiling or other water sports, given that their region is tailor-made for such pursuits. The session concluded in a congenial spirit, marked by selfies and autographs.

First Day of the Competition

On Thursday, with a storm predicted by Météo France, the organizers opted to commence the competition around 3pm, coinciding with the storm's climax. A successful downwind event mandates a robust tailwind and waves propelling in the same direction. Thus, the inaugural 14 km course spanned from Lanvéoc to Landévennec, amidst rain with winds fluctuating between 15 and 25 knots. Despite suboptimal visibility, competitors showcased resilience, with a sole withdrawal attributed to equipment damage. The day culminated with a screening of Olivia Piana's documentary, detailing her downwind foil record in Portugal, intriguing both sport enthusiasts and curious locals.

Women

1. Olivia Piana (France)
2. Amandine Chazot (France)

Men

1. Etienne Fleure (Tahiti)
2. Oskar Johansson (Australia)
3. Mateo Ell (Hawaii)

4. Jack Ho (Hawaii)
5. Raiarii Fadier (Tahiti)

A Testing Second Day

The weather remained capricious, oscillating between gusty winds, rain showers, fog patches, and sporadic sunshine. However, neither Mother Nature's mood swings nor inherent challenges dampened the spirits of the zealous participants and organizers. The decision was to embark on a 20 km course within the Rade de Brest. This course proved more taxing than the previous day, especially under relentless rain. Contrary to expectations of local participants having a home advantage, it was the tenacity of the Hawaiian and Tahitian competitors that shone through. The race epitomized the spectrum of SUP Foil proficiency, with a mere 30-minute delta between the frontrunner and the final competitor. Evening descended with a quintessential warm Breton ambiance, allowing everyone a moment of reprieve.

Women

1. Olivia Piana (France)
2. Amandine Chazot (France)

Men

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Day Three: The Championship Finale

The climatic mood stabilized, unveiling the mesmerizing landscapes of the Breton cliffs. Despite the gentle 15-knot breeze, an offshore race was set in motion. The stakes soared; the leaderboard was still in flux, with minute margins, occasionally mere seconds, setting the competitors apart. This concluding event was pivotal, crowning those with unparalleled stamina.

Women's Final Ranking

1. Olivia Piana (France)
2. Amandine Chazot (France)

Men's Final Ranking

1. Etienne Fleure (Tahiti)
2. Oskar Johansson (Australia)
3. Jack Ho (Hawaii)
4. Raiarii Fadier (Tahiti)
5. Mateo Ell (Hawaii)

Conclusion

These athletes deserve monumental accolades for delivering a visual spectacle and aquatic masterclasses. This Open underlined Crozon and its environs as a prime hub for Downwind Foil. It heralds a new epoch for foiling and infuses fresh vigor into maritime tournaments. Given the burgeoning trajectory of this sport, we eagerly await the third edition, slated for October 18-20, 2024.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the town of Crozon, the Fédération Française de Surf, Surfpistols, Axis Foil, AppleTree, C-Skin, and myriad others. Special commendations to our teams both offshore and onshore, Chris Puremagic for the lively commentary, Stef Vidéo for the visual coverage, Loïc Olivier for capturing still memories, Stéphane Hocquinghem for orchestrating communications, and Foil Magazine.

Photos: Loïc Olivier

Download photos:

<https://opendefrancedwfoil.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Open-de-France-Downwind-Foil-photos.zip>

Video : Stef Vidéo

See the video: <https://youtu.be/5TRvbdlw9fU?si=ndveljm9O6FH-fOB>

Website: <https://opendefrancedwfoil.com/>

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