

Original Articles



Interview with Jorgen and Jacob BM

Jörgen and Jacob Bojsen-Möller granted us an interview on the 4th racing day at the world championships in Spain. Right after they had consolidated their 6th world title on the very same day.

S: First of all I would like to congratulate you on today. I believe after today the race for the title is over?

Jörgen : Thank you very much, yes it is over now, it was over before the last race today. We were 2e in the first race and that was enough.

S: I believe you were olympic champion in 1988? What was that like? With whom were you sailing then?

Jörgen: Well, I started sailing with Jacob until 1985. Then I started with Christian Grönborg and we sailed until the olympics in 1988. After that I sailed with my nephew Jens Bojsen-Möller in Barcelona 1992. After that I sailed with my brother again.

S: And you've been World Champions after that many times?

Jörgen: This is number six, yes.

S: How did you train in the olympic times? Did you sail full time or did you have a job on the side?

Jörgen: Up to the first time in 1980 we sailed all the time. I was a student back then and we sailed almost every day. I finished my study in 1982 and after 1984 we began sailing full time. A lot of time we spent working on the boat and the mast. There were of course days with too much wind or too little, but we sailed the rest of the days.

Up to the 1988 games I had my job, but I would start early in the morning so I could go early and sail the rest of the day. The last two and a half months we sailed full time in preparation for the games.

There were a few foreign teams that would come and train with us in Denmark. We knew that the '88 games would be in very big waves so we found a place north of Copenhagen where the conditions were alike.

S: Who were your strongest opponents in those days?

Jörgen: The competition was very high. The problem in that time was that there were so many great sailors and only three medals. A lot of good sailors would not get a medal. And up to the '88 games there was no way of knowing who would win. The teams from New Zealand and France were very strong in heavy winds. In light winds there were Doreste from Spain and Batzil from Germany.

S: Did you have a lot of media attention back then? W

Well yes, there were just two gold medalists for Denmark in 1988, one in bicycling and one in sailing, so yeah, we were a bit famous back then. Some of the sailing was shown on television, they didn't show the whole race but there

was a summary.

S: You've also been sailing the 5o5 together. Are you still doing that?

Jörgen: Yes, we've started a little in the 5o5 again, so we are now competing in two classes where we barely have time to sail in one class. So we are very busy with that at the moment.

S: Would you say that the 5o5 is a lot like the Flying Dutchman?

Jacob: It is different, the 5o5 feels different down wind. It's a lighter boat with a bigger spinnaker which means you can go faster down wind. As soon as there is some wind you can go reaching down wind with the crew in the trapeze. Where as with the FD you would go straight for the mark. So you can go jibing down, which is great fun really. In the FD we only start jibing down when the wind gets up to 7 or 8 m/s or so.

C: In the 5o5 do you sail at the same level as you do in the FD?

Jörgen: No, well we won the Europeans last year and we have just won the Danish nationals. But there are many good teams competing in the 5o5 worldwide. I think there are more good teams sailing in the 5o5 then there are in the FD. The top level is probably the same, but when you become 15th in the 5o5 there are still a few great teams behind you. The 5o5 is also a bigger class, we sailed one Worlds with 170 competing boats which is crowded for one start. For that they used a gate-start but still that's a lot of boats coming to the first mark.

S: Did you make your sails especially for this regatta?

Jacob: Yes, for this regatta we made a more powerful spinnaker because we thought there would be much wind here. The more powerful spinnaker you have, the lower you can sail on the down wind course so we planned to do that. We planned to go fast and low, but here we got the opposite. Instead we have had low winds and very tight reaches. Luckily our spinnaker likes that also.

S: What do you feel is your best result since the Olympics?

Jacob: The World Championships in Denmark were great, although the level of sailing was very high we managed to win 5 out of 6 races. But also this year's Championships we are very happy with. There are a few new strong boats from Spain here and we're also getting older so I think we should be happy to still be able to win. And although it's the 6th time, we still feel that we're being challenged to sail at our best. We had to be focused all the time and the competition here at Mar Menor was very high.

S: There are a lot of factors that make a great sailor. What factors do you feel give you the edge over other FD sailors?

Jörgen: I think that our boat speed is good all the time. And that makes tacktacks a lot easier. When you're lacking speed you are always covered and you can never do what you want. Then you must always wait for a good spot to tack. So I think that speed is an important factor for us.

Jacob: Here we made a lot of careful starts. And when you have enough speed you can still come out ahead of the mass. At the Europeans in Austria last year we had an OCS which cost us the title. Here we have been very conservative in the rest of our tacktacks. We tried not to go all the way to the right or the left keeping our options open. Most of the time we went to the right but not all the way.

S: When you're ahead of the field do you anticipate your tacks on other teams?

Jacob: No, we play our own compass and we use our own tacktacks. Of course we're looking at other teams to see what the wind is doing. We keep an eye on other teams to see in which direction they are going and how fast they are going.

S: To achieve great boat speed, what would you say is most important? The sails or the other materials, such as the mast, the boom etc.

Jacob: I think that the most important thing is how the sails are working. When we are sailing, we go through lots of different combinations. We are very quick to trim the boat, so if we go slow we will trim the sails again. I think we are quick to solve the problems, if there are any.

Jorgen: Of all materials the rig is the most important. The mast and the sails are much more important than the hull, I think. All hulls are quite similar. And I'm sure we have a good hull, I'm sure Mader did a good job in building our boat. We have had a lot of boats made by Mader, and I think this one is very fast, but more difference can be made in the mast and sails.

S: During the race, do you have a lot of discussion on board?

Jorgen: Yes, the crew is more able to look around, while the helmsman has to go for maximum speed. So the crew tells what is happening, and then we discuss what to do. The crew can see what is happening, but the helmsman can also feel when the wind is lifting. So we decide together what to do next. We don't talk much about maneuvers. We have done them so many times that we don't need to discuss them any more.

S: Do you constantly look at your tell tales?

Jorgen: Yes I look at the tell tale in the genoa. I never look at the tell tales in the back of the main sail. To trim the mainsail, we just look at the shape. The top tell tale should be curling for most of the time, but to be honest I never look at it.

S: Do you always use your traveler?

Jorgen: Yes, the traveler should always be placed windward, and then the boom is pulled down by the kicker. That way, the main sheet only controls the boom going in and out while the shape of the sail stays the same. In strong winds we have a lot of tension in the boom kicker. This bends the mast and flattens the main sail.

C: Did you decide to sail FD yourselves, or did the Olympic committee of Denmark ask you?

Jorgen: Well, we won the European championships in the 505. After that they asked us to start in the FD to sail at the Olympics in 1980. They even gave us a boat to sail in, and, of course, when you are young you want to go to the Olympics.

S: Are the sails you use the same sails that you make for other FD sailors?

Jacob: Yes, it's the same sails. Except for the spinnaker we used here in Spain, we use the same sails we sell to other sailors. Actually, the main sail is one that was shipped to Holland. Something had gone wrong with the package, so it came back to us. When it came out of the box it was to be furlled to be sold, so we started sailing with it ourselves.

S: Do you have a lot of contact with other FD sailors?

Jacob: Yes, worldwide contacts in the class have always been great. We have known most of these people for many years now. The last years we have also had a lot of contact with the Hungarian team HUN 70. They come to Denmark maybe two times a year That started after the Worlds in Warnemunde. We started sailing together to develop the carbon rig we now use.

C: Do you have any magic advice for young FD sailors on how to become as great as you are?

Jacob: Hours on the water.

Jorgen: Yeah, I think there's something magic about spending a lot of time on the water. In some way it helps. Even when you come back from a day of sailing, and you think you haven't learned anything. We have done a lot of practicing by ourselves. When you are alone, you cannot know whether you're going fast or not. But you get a lot of feel for the boat. And when you make marks to round, you can learn a lot about handling. You shouldn't just go sail. You have to make a plan on what to practice today and then do that. That helps for sure.