

# Shock loss raises questions on Alinghi

**YACHTING:** Swiss insist they've come to win despite big loss to S Africans

by Dana Johannsen

Alinghi's shock loss yesterday to Team Shosholoza in their final race of the round robin of the Louis Vuitton Pacific Series has raised questions about whether the America's Cup holders are taking the event seriously.

The Swiss suffered an embarrassing loss to Shosholoza on day five, finishing nearly four minutes behind the South Africans after making a series of uncharacteristic errors.

It was Alinghi's second loss of the regatta, having gone down to Team Origin on day three, and their mixed form early on has prompted speculation they are treating the regatta as more of a holiday.

The rumours suggest Alinghi do not regard the Louis Vuitton series as a serious event and their minds are not on the game, with the team more here for the social aspect.

But Alinghi navigator Juan Vila insists his team have come to Auckland to win.

"We were as concentrated as ever and obviously wanting to have a good result and trying to improve. But the conditions didn't really play in to our hands, and Shosholoza did a very good job of sailing the breeze instead of sailing the opponent," said Vila.

"All of us in the group are so competitive, we do not come to a regatta to lose."

But it was clear Alinghi were not on their game against Shosholoza yesterday.

The Swiss were outwitted in an extraordinary pre-start and the problems seemed to compound from there.

With the benefit of starboard entry, Shosholoza controlled Alinghi helmsman Ed Baird in a prolonged dial-up that carried both boats above the startline. There they hung head to wind for more than three minutes until Shosholoza skipper Paolo Cian, timing his move to perfection, returned with a long, swooping turn to hit the line at speed, with Baird trailing by almost three boat lengths.

The Swiss made several more costly mistakes during the race, allowing Shosholoza to make gains on every leg, with the South Africans eventually crossing the line with an incredible 1km advantage.

Despite two losses in the first round robin, Alinghi still limp into the gold fleet for the second stage of the regatta as the second qualifier from pool B.

Team New Zealand boss Grant Dalton expects the Swiss are still a threat in the regatta and is not reading too much into Alinghi's performance yesterday.

"It would be a very brave man to go out there and underestimate Alinghi," he said.

"It was just one of those days for Alinghi. When you're on the wrong side of it, you're really on the wrong side of it and it just went from bad to worse from there.

"If it was us, it was such a freaky loss that you'd just put it down to that. You'd just say 'whatever' and let it go, there's

## DAY FIVE RESULTS

### Pool A

- BMW Oracle Racing bt Damiani Italia (55s)
- Team New Zealand bt K-Challenge (1m 38s)
- Bye: China Team

### Pool B

- Shosholoza bt Alinghi (3m 49s)
- Team Origin bt Greek Challenge (58s)
- Bye: Luna Fossa

## Round robin two

### GOLD FLEET

Team New Zealand  
BMW Oracle Racing  
Damiani Italia  
Team Origin  
Alinghi  
Luna Fossa

### SILVER FLEET

K-Challenge  
China Team  
Team Shosholoza  
Greek Challenge

## WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

- The top three teams in each pool have formed the gold fleet, while the remaining four teams are in the silver fleet for the second round robin. The gold fleet will sail three races a day for five days with the silver fleet sailing two races a day for three days.
- After round robin two, Team New Zealand will proceed directly to the Louis Vuitton Pacific Series final.
- The top-ranked team of the gold fleet after round robin two will advance directly to the Challenger final.
- The two leading boats in the silver fleet after round robin two join the four other boats in the gold fleet in the quarter-finals, where they will battle it out for the remaining spot in the Challenger final.
- The winner of the Challenger final goes through to face Team New Zealand in the Louis Vuitton series final.

no point debriefing something like that."

Emirates Team New Zealand and Team Origin were top of their respective pools after unbeaten runs through the first round robin.

The Kiwi syndicate had a convincing win over French K-Challenge and Dalton said his team had met all the objectives they wanted to in the first stage of the regatta.

Team Origin reinforced their billing as the team to watch in the regatta with a 58s win over Greek Challenge, while BMW Oracle Racing notched up a 52s win over Damiani Italia.

The teams will have a rest day today before the second round robin begins tomorrow.