

Team NZ's last chance to get it right Alinghi

YACHTING: After two losses the crew will be looking for a morale-boosting win against BMWOracle, reports Dana Johannsen

ROUND ROBIN TWO

Day four results

Gold fleet
Dantoni Italia bt Luna Rossa (1m 40s)
Alinghi bt BMWOracle (32s)
Team Origin bt Team New Zealand (7s)

Today's races

Gold fleet
Luna Rossa v Alinghi
Team Origin v Dantoni Italia
BMWOracle v Team New Zealand

After two losses from their past three races, Team New Zealand will today get their chance to get things right before the finals of the Louis Vuitton Pacific Series.

The Kiwis today face BMWOracle Racing in their last official race before this weekend's finals.

With Team New Zealand guaranteed a place in the finals, they dip out of the regular following the conclusion of round robin two, while the remaining teams battle it out to decide who will challenge for the title.

Team New Zealand will be looking for a confidence-boosting win against the American syndicate, after suffering a narrow loss to Ben Ainslie's Team Origin crew yesterday. It was their second loss in gold fleet racing, having also gone down to Dantoni Italia earlier in round robin two.

Although Saturday's abandoned race against Alinghi was chalked up as a win in Team New Zealand's column, as the Swiss failed to show up on the startline, the only real win for the Kiwis in the second round robin came against Luna Rossa.

But Team New Zealand skipper Dean Barker was not participating after yesterday's loss to the Brits, which he put down to a wrong call made on the startline.

"Our plan was to start to the right, which we got, but unfortunately for us the left was a bit stronger than we anticipated and they got the initial charge enough," said Barker.

"I'm sure we can bounce back tomorrow. It's not a big ask. It's not as if we're sailing terribly. It's just today things didn't go our way on the first shift."

Barker said he was pleased to get



BAD OMEG: Oracle trail Alinghi in their clash won by the latter in the Louis Vuitton Series yesterday.

the opportunity to test themselves in pressure situations. "I think the biggest thing for us is that today and tomorrow are our last opportunity to do well before the final, so we're really just looking for a morale boost and it is good to have some races close and give yourselves opportunities when you're behind."

Alinghi's decision to forfeit against Team New Zealand robbed the Kiwis of a previous opportunity to get in some

tough match-racing.

But Barker said he was still confident his team would be sufficiently battle-hardened for the finals.

"We've done enough racing that we are sort of pretty confident in our ability, it's all going well," he said.

"It's about getting the plan at the start and making sure the plan and the strategy is right, so we'll work hard on that and try and do a better job

tomorrow."

Alinghi managed to make it to the startline for yesterday's match against bitter rivals BMWOracle Racing. The race was the first time the two warring syndicates have gone head to head on the water since the legal feud erupted over the 2007-08 season.

In what BMWOracle must surely hope is not a sign of things to come in the courtroom, Alinghi came out on top of yesterday's battle, winning by a

margin of 32 seconds.

After racing was delayed several hours after a lack of wind, it was Alinghi which seemed to switch back into gear more quickly.

Starting control of the match from the outset, Alinghi won the favourable right-hand side and with the course very one-sided Oracle were left with

no options. Bend Battenworth has labelled Team New Zealand skip-

per Dean Barker a "sok" after Barker criticised the Swiss for forfeiting their race against them.

Battenworth said he did not have a problem naming anyone but he needed to put the team first.

He said on the syndicate website there was nothing personal behind Alinghi not turning up at the start line. "I'm hoping to get to the final and race these guys," he said.

PICTURE / KEVIN ROBERT

turn
regatta
spirit
to spite

DANA JOHANNSEN



IT HAD been billed as the Friendly Regatta.

The Louis Vuitton Pacific Series was an opportunity for syndicates to put the tensions of the past 18 months of America's Cup racing behind them and back to the water in an open and friendly atmosphere.

But the atmosphere and politicking that has become inextricable with America's Cup syndicates reared their ugly head when Alinghi defeated their eagerly awaited clash against Emirates Team New Zealand on Saturday.

It was an extraordinary move from the Swiss team, considering the lengths Bend Battenworth and his crew had gone to to try to win over the New Zealand public since their arrival in Auckland.

All the goodwill Alinghi had generated through their "charm offensive" was thrown overboard with their refusal to race the Kiwis.

The match had been hyped up as the biggest race of the regatta so far, and the huge spectator fleet assembled on the Waitemata to witness the first showdown between the two syndicates since July 2007 were left bitterly disappointed by Alinghi's no-show.

Alinghi's explanation was that the race was meaningless, as no competition points were on offer, and soils the risk of incurring penalty points in the race was too great.

With Team New Zealand guaranteed a place in next weekend's finals, races against the Kiwis don't carry any points.

The race was put in place to prevent Team New Zealand from being accused of foul play after they had finished the race with a 10-point lead.

But Alinghi argued it was unfair that they couldn't have won any points, yet they could have been defeated