



2.4
AUSTRALIA

Matt Bugg silver medal at 2016 Paralympics

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Report by Richard Aspland - World Sailing & Australian Sailing Team News

Photos by Richard Langdon - World Sailing



Rio 2016 Final Day Richard Langdon / World Sailing

Congratulations Matt - a true champion!!!

Champions conquer on sun soaked opening day

13 September 2016, Richard Aspland - World Sailing



Rio 2016 Practice Racing Richard Langdon / World Sailing

In the build-up to the Rio 2016 Paralympic Sailing Competition the sky has been a dull shade of grey, but the minute the first day of racing started, the stereotypical Rio de Janeiro sunshine came out with a 10 knot wind to boot. It was a glorious opening session of sailing.

And it wasn't just the elements that delivered either as current Paralympic champions continued where they left off from London 2012, leading their respective fleets. Great Britain's Helena Lucas in the 2.4 Norlin OD, Australia in the SKUD18 and with the previous gold medallists absent, it was the Australian team who looked to fill the void early on in the Sonar.

The day began with a moment of reflection as Technical Delegate David Staley led a moment of silence for Ian Harrison MBE who passed away in late August, and quite fittingly a Memorial Service was held in his Great British home county on the same day as the Paralympic sailing begun.

A pioneer of disabled sailing, Harrison was key to the sport being accepted as a Paralympic medal sport in 2000 and was also the Technical Delegate for that first Paralympic Sailing Competition in Sydney.

One Person Keelboat - 2.4 Norlin OD In the hotly contested 2.4 Norlin OD class the pre-Games favourites all justified their tags with a bunched top six, but it is current Paralympic champion, Great Britain's Helena Lucas, who has edged in front with an impressive first race win and second placed finish on the Pao de Acucar (Sugarloaf Mountain) race area to end the day on three points.

Obviously happy with the start, which may have been worrying the Briton, Lucas commented, "It's always good to have a good start you know. In the few regattas leading up to this I've not had a very good start then you're always playing catch up the rest of the week. So you know it's great because it gives you a good confidence boost and a good platform to carry on the rest of the week."

Relief then turned to talk of some Rio fun and games, "It was tricky, especially the second race. The first race was a little bit easier for me because I managed to get my nose out in front from the word go and had a little bit more breathing space. But the second race was an absolute fight," expressed Lucas.

"I think there was six of us just fighting like crazy for second place. It was snakes and ladders the whole time. Luckily I finished on a ladder not a snake. It was really close racing."

In the 'easier' first race Lucas led at every mark followed closely behind by world champion, Germany's Heiko Kroeger, who seemed to be one step behind the Briton all day. Even when Lucas finished in second in race two the big German came home in third. Kroeger does however sit in second overall on five points for his opening day efforts.

Taking the second bullet of the day was USA's Dee Smith. Smith made up for a disappointing seventh place in race one to take the win as he led the fleet at every mark, leaving everyone else to fight it out behind him. Smith sits in third overall on eight points, but does tie on points with Australia's Matt Bugg who scored a 3,5 for the day.

France's Damien Seguin sits in fifth on the leaderboard with nine points and is just ahead of Norway's Bjornar Erikstad on 11. From there, a small gap has opened up over the rest of the fleet with Italy's Antonio Squizzato the next best on 16 points.

Australian Sailing Team NewsMatt Bugg is currently lying fourth overall in the International 2.4mR class. He recorded a third place in the first race, and then a fifth place in the second race of the day. He is currently on eight points overall with third-placed Dee Smith from the USA. Great Britain lead the fleet overall followed by Germany.

"The first day is always a bit of a stress for me," said Bugg at the conclusion of racing. "I'm ready for the next five days now. I didn't sail to the best of my ability, but it wasn't my worst. I'm happy to end up with eight points after the first day. Both those races are keepers, so I'm happy with that.

"We had great conditions today. The top mark on our course was close under Sugar Loaf, so the wind was shifty, but we all had to deal with the same stuff. "

Dominant day for the British as the fight back begins

14 September 2016, Richard Aspland - World Sailing



Matt Bugg (AUS) Richard Langdon / World Sailing

John Robertson, Hannah Stodel and Steve Thomas (GBR) have a wealth of experience behind them and are at their fourth Paralympic Games, but the first two days have not gone to plan for the 2015 world champions. Three bullets from three races was a tonic that was desperately needed to boost their chances, undoubtedly giving them performance of the day.

In a very close second for that accolade were defending Two Person Keelboat (SKUD18) Paralympic champions, Australia's Daniel Fitzgibbon and Liesl Tesch, who day by day eek out more of a lead on their rivals. In the One Person Keelboat (2.4 Norlin OD) it is still anyone's guess as the positions continue to trade as the discard comes in to play for all three fleets.

One Person Keelboat - 2.4 Norlin OD The one fleet that missed the memo about domination was the 2.4 Norlin OD. Touted as the widest open of the three fleets, the sailors are definitely living up to the tag as six sailors are separated by just six points.

Germany's Heiko Kroeger is one of, if not the most experienced sailor in the fleet, so who better to ask about the changing positions and ever changing leaderboard, "It's tough competition and this race course is very difficult to sail. The competition is very close in the 2.4. There is a lot of sailors who can sail fast and sometimes they might not have that experience in winning medals, but they are still very hard to beat. Although this is a small fleet, it is still a very hard competition."

Kroeger has a Paralympic gold medal and multiple world championship titles under his belt, and he is hoping this could give him the edge when push comes to shove and the competition nears its end, "Experience is important. If you have to think about what you should do, you are already too late. Things need to be automatic. So if you have lots of experience your reaction is different and your tactical decision are different and you're able to decide faster. And hopefully the right decisions and this is the difference between experience or not."

Currently sitting top is the defending Paralympic champion from Great Britain, Helena Lucas. Despite a good first two days of competition she could not carry the consistency through with a 3,4 and a discarded 10th to give her 10 points overall.

Australia's Matt Bugg was consistent, but only in comparison to the rest of the fleet with a 1,3,5 which moves him to second on the leaderboard with 12 points.

The big German Kroeger has the same points tally as Bugg but will be disappointed with a second, fifth and discarded 12th. Another world champion, France's Damien Seguin is just one point behind on 13 points. USA's Dee Smith is on 15. On 16 points is Norway's Bjornar Erikstad who started with a bullet but followed up with a respectable fourth and a discarded 11th.

The fleet fall away after Erikstad with a ten-point gap to Italy's Antonio Squizzato in seventh.

Australia threatening a Rio sailing whitewash

15 September 2016, Richard Aspland - World Sailing



Rio 2016 Race Day #4 Richard Langdon / World Sailing

Australia moved to the top of every fleet at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Sailing Competition thanks to a thrilling finish in the final race of the day in the One Person Keelboat (2.4 Norlin OD).

Already sitting very pretty at the top of the Two Person Keelboat (SKUD18), the Australian Three Person Keelboat (Sonar) team sailed consistently again to hold on to top spot before a determined Matt Bugg made it a clean sweep for his nation at the end of race day four.

With world champions galore in the 2.4 Norlin OD fleet, Bugg can mix it with the best calling upon a wealth of competition experience. But it wasn't until April 2016 that the Aussie sailor won his first international regatta. Now he is threatening to take the biggest prize of all from under the noses of a high calibre fleet.

One Person Keelboat - 2.4 Norlin OD Sailing consistently, and it seemed quite quietly, Australia's Matt Bugg has been hanging around the top five positions in every race.

While the attention has been on the world champions and Paralympic gold medallists in the fleet, Bugg has just been plugging away, getting good results. Now he can no longer fly under the radar with two bullets and a second place from three day four races.

Bugg sits just one point ahead of Great Britain's defending champion, Helena Lucas, thanks to a photo finish in the final race of the day. Talking about his ongoing duel with the Briton, Bugg said, "It was really close. That's twice today Helena and I finished with a metre between us and now there's one point between us as well," he chuckled.

"It's amazing, you know, the difference between coming first or second in the last race of the day and what sort of mood that can put you in for the rest of the night. Yesterday I was annoyed because Helena got me right on the line and today I'm stoked because I got her right on the line."

The Australian has been the most consistent sailor so far in the fleet, but even he can't put his finger on why that is, "I'm not sure how I've done it. There's still a few races left where I can ruin that [consistency] though. But I think on these race courses you've just got to never give up. There's always a chance that you can get back in again and the same when you're leading, as someone can always catch up. You've really got to concentrate from the start of the first race to the last moment of the final race."

On his day Bugg can, and has beaten everyone in the fleet, but it wasn't until the Sailing World Cup Hyeres in April this year when he beat everyone together at the same event, "I've always known I can beat these guys but until then [Hyerès] I'd never beaten them all in the same regatta. Of course it gave me the confidence that I could win races and also win regattas. Confidence is very important in this game."

More confidence can be taken from sitting on the top on 16 points looking down at the rest of the field behind him, but only just behind in Lucas' case as she has 17 points.

There are always two sides to a story and hearing from Bugg on his budding rivalry with Lucas, it was only right to ask the Briton the same question, "The last race was all going quite well and I was feeling quite chilled, playing the shifts and then literally, I was keeping an eye on Damien, the French guy, because he was second and I didn't really think I needed to worry too much about Matt. But literally I looked over and he's got this massive lift and caught up loads.

"We went round neck and neck at the top mark and then down the run it was neck and neck. Across the finish I caught a wave and surged forwards and I thought I'd got it so it was that close."

Lucas may have been shocked to see Bugg in her rear view mirror in the last race, but not at the top fighting for gold, "Matt's had a great year. He's really found his form this year. I always thought Heiko [Kroeger] and Damien [Seguin]. Damien still is certainly one to keep an eye on. Matt's showed some really good performance this year and I always knew he'd be somebody to keep an eye on."

With Christ the Redeemer looking down on the sailing areas, Lucas is hoping for a bit of divine intervention of her own to get Bugg out of his top five streak, "I'm hoping the gods of Brazil might be able to rustle something up tomorrow for me."

Sitting in third on 23 points is former world champion Damien Seguin (FRA). With three races still to go, the Frenchman is not going to give up on a medal, and as he walks through the mixed zone he stops and says, "For now, I have one foot on the podium and I want a medal."

To get that medal he needs to hold off the chasers, and with a gap opening up to fourth placed Dee Smith (USA) who has 31 points and Heiko Kroeger (GER) and Bjornar Erikstad (NOR) who have 35 points, Seguin will feel a hint of confidence.

Aussie gold rush on the shores of Rio de Janeiro

16 September 2016, Richard Aspland - World Sailing

There was Aussie elation at the Marina da Gloria on day five as the Rio 2016 Paralympic gold medals were wrapped up in the Two Person (SKUD18) and Three Person Keelboat (Sonar) with a day to spare.

Daniel Fitzgibbon and Liesl Tesch in the SKUD18 were yet again on fire as they took two bullets from two races to seal the first ever Paralympic sailing title defence in commanding fashion.

In the Sonar, Colin Harrison, Russell Boaden and Jonathan Harris go in to the final race with a healthy 24-point lead and a guaranteed gold medal that ensures Advance Australia Fair will ring out on Flamengo Beach twice come the Medal Ceremony.

It was looking like the Australian anthem could be played three times as Matt Bugg came ashore with a four point lead in the One Person Keelboat (2.4 Norlin OD) only to be disqualified from the final race, demoting him to third and promoting Great Britain's Helena Lucas to the top spot.

One Person Keelboat - 2.4 Norlin OD Great Britain's Helena Lucas leads the 2.4 Norlin OD fleet, but it could have all been so different.

When the boats docked at the Marina da Gloria, Australia's Matt Bugg was holding a guaranteed Paralympic medal and a four-point advantage at the top. But in a change of fortunes, Bugg finds himself with a lot of work to do just to make sure he doesn't leave Rio 2016 empty handed after a jury decision went against him and in favour of the protestor, Arturo Montes-Vorcy (ESP).

That decision also moved France's Damien Seguin from a guaranteed Paralympic medal, to a guaranteed Paralympic silver medal.

"Today was a terrible day of sailing," Seguin said laughing, "I was really close with the other guys, especially with the American [Dee Smith] who was fighting for the podium today, but finally it was really good for me. Two second places. I am really happy tonight because I'm on the podium."

Seguin's second win of the day was later upgraded to first as the Bugg protest result trickled through the fleet.

Champion in Athens 2004, silver in Beijing 2008 and fourth in London 2012. Seguin is happy to be back on the medal trail, "It's my third medal. It's just crazy. It hasn't sunk in yet, tomorrow maybe. I'm still in the race [for gold] and we will see tomorrow."

That race for gold will be against the reigning champion Helena Lucas. Lucas sits on 25 points and just one point above Seguin on 26. It'll be a shootout for gold on the final day.

With the protest changing Bugg's final race bullet to a disqualification, the Aussie fell from top to third where he sits with 35 points. Sailing consistently all week, Bugg finished 14th in Race 9, which he counts, and now finds himself in a fight for bronze with Dee Smith (USA).

With silver and bronze still up for grabs in the Sonar and SKUD18 and a tense race for gold in the 2.4 Norlin OD, the final race day will welcome a full house of spectators lining the sands of Flamengo Bay with racing scheduled to start at 12:00 local time.



Rio 2016 Race Day #5 Richard Langdon / World Sailing

Australian Sailing Team NewsIn the 2.4mR class, the competition has been a lot closer for Australia's Matt Bugg. A photo finish yesterday saw him hold the lead overnight, but a tough first race today saw him drop back to second overall. Bugg crossed the line in 14th in today's first race, but his consistent results throughout the week kept him in striking distance on the overall leader board. However, it was the second race today that caused the most controversy. Bugg appeared to be sailing well and crossed the finish line in first place, only to be disqualified in the protest room this evening for a port/starboard incident with the Spanish boat on the second beat. This leaves him third place overall, twelve points off GBR in first place and eleven points off FRA in second place. The USA boat is only two points behind Australia, so Bugg will need a strong result in tomorrow's final race to hang onto a medal.

Seguin claims gold in Flamengo Beach thriller

17 September 2016, Richard Aspland - World Sailing



Silver to Matt Bugg Richard Langdon / World Sailing

In a finale fitting on the setting, the Rio 2016 Paralympic Sailing Competition came to a spectacular close with the medals decided in front of a sell-out crowd lining the shores of Flamengo Beach.

Racing on the Pao de Acucar (Sugarloaf Mountain) race course, onlookers were treated to a thrilling climax in which some medals were settled by just seconds.

After 11 races under the backdrop of Sugarloaf Mountain and Christ the Redeemer, the stakes were high for a chosen few sailors who had the opportunity to grab a Paralympic medal. But while some would feel the elation, some would inevitably miss out.

The final gold to be decided went to France's Damien Seguin who joined Australia's Two Person and Three Person teams who wrapped up the gold the previous day.

One Person Keelboat - 2.4 Norlin OD France's Damien Seguin became a double Paralympic gold medallist when he crossed the line in fourth position in front of the only sailor that could mathematically beat him, London 2012 gold medallist, Great Britain's Helena Lucas.

Straight in to the mixed zone to speak to the waiting press, Seguin said in his usual cool, calm demeanor, "I'm just happy. I'm just happy as I have worked a lot since my fourth place in London 2012. I was sure I could do it, and I did."

The French sailor never doubted his own talent and with a history of international titles to back it up, the confidence was well founded, "Of course I expecting to do it. I'm a competitor, so I always go for first place. My start to the regatta was not very good, but every day I improved my racing. I always say that the regatta is 11 races, not 10. And by the 11th race I got to first overall."

Seguin's French charm and likeable manner will make him a popular winner, but for Seguin he also had some familiar faces watching on, people close to his heart, "I have an association in France for people with disabilities and they came to Rio this week. They were at the beach every day to support me. It was amazing. This association is for encouraging people with disabilities to go sailing."

Hoping to inspire people with disabilities, Seguin sailed consistently high throughout the regatta with his lowest placed finish a sixth.

Another consistent sailor, Australia's Matt Bugg, won silver thanks to a bullet in the final race of the competition. That win leapfrogged Bugg in to the silver spot and dropped former champion Lucas in to bronze as she finished down the fleet in 15th.

Threatening Lucas' place on the podium was USA's Dee Smith. Any further up than the sixth place he crossed the line in and it could have a very anxious moment for the Briton. Luckily the points she had built up through the early race days stood her in good stead for another Paralympic medal.

Australian Sailing Team News An overnight protest on the penultimate day saw Australia's Matt Bugg disqualified from race 10 in the 2.4mR and as a result he moved from 1st to 3rd overall coming into today's final race. With the standings, Bugg had to protect the Bronze from USA sailor, Dee Smith who was only two points behind. He was also a long shot at moving up in either Silver or Gold, but had to have 10 places between he and the competitors from Great Britain and France.

Bugg got caught up in a start line incident with USA's Smith, and was back in the fleet in the early stages of the race, but sailed well to move back up into first place by the third mark rounding. He eventually crossed the finish line in first place, then the nervous wait began to see where France and Great Britain would finish. France crossed the finish line in fourth, while Great Britain finished back in 13th place – enough to move Bugg up into the Silver medal position.

"I've done it pretty tough this week," said Bugg. "I didn't get a lot of sleep last night (after the protest) and I really went into this race in a tough position. I can't be too disappointed with the result.

"I had a good experience in London and I saw my team mates up there getting a gold medal and I decided that's what I wanted. To come here and get a Silver is an achievement and I'm really happy with that."

Overall results – Rio 2016 Paralympics

Pos	NOC	Crew	Race											Points	
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total	Net
1	FRA	Damien Seguin	5	4	2	2	(6)	5	2	3	2	1	4	36	30
2	AUS	Matthew Bugg	3	5	3	1	5	2	1	1	14	(17) DSQ	1	53	36
3	GBR	Helena Lucas	1	2	4	(17) DSQ	3	1	4	2	3	5	14	56	39
4	USA	Dee Smith	7	1	(8)	6	1	4	5	7	1	5 STP	6	51	43
5	NOR	Bjørnar Erikstad	4	7	1	4	(11)	8	3	8	5	9	3	63	52
6	GER	Heiko Kroeger	2	3	5	11	2	10	7	6	(15)	2	7	70	55
7	ITA	Antonio Squizzato	10	6	9	7	4	9	6	5	6	10	(11)	83	72
8	FIN	Niko Salomaa	9	11	7	9	9	7	(14)	9	4	6	8	93	79
9	ESP	Arturo Montes-Vorcy	11	12	10	3	8	11	(14) DPI	10	9	3	5	96	82
10	CAN	Bruce Millar	6	10	(17) DNF	8	17 BFD	3	10	4	7	8	10	100	83
11	AUT	Sven Reiger	8	8	6	5	7	6	11	12	10	(13)	13	99	86
12	SWE	Fia Fjeldahl	13	15	13 STP	12	(17) RET	12	8	13	12	11	2	128	111
13	CZE	Daniel Bina	15	14	11	(17) DNF	17 DNC	14	9	11	8	7	9	132	115
14	MAS	Al Mustakim Matrin	14	9	(17) DNF	10	10	15	15	15	13	15	15	148	131
15	ARG	Juan Fernandez Ocampo	(17) DNF	13	17 DNF	17 DNF	17 DNF	16	12	14	11	12	17 DSQ	163	146
16	BRA	Antonio Nuno De Castro Santa Rosa	12	16	(17) DNF	17 DNS	17 DNC	13	16	16	16	14	12	166	149