



# PRESS RELEASE

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## THE 2008 JAGUAR SERIES STARTS OFF WITH 73 ETHELLS

Bill Hardesty on USA 979 wins the Etchells Piana Cup after five races in Biscayne Bay, December 8–9.

SOUTH MIAMI, FLORIDA—Hundreds of Etchells sailors from North America, Europe, and Australia crowded Miami's Biscayne Bay December 8-9, 2007, for the Piana Cup, the first of four class events in the annual Jaguar Series. The event attracted 73 boats and their crew, including several of the class's world champions. At the end of the weekend, Bill Hardesty and crew, sailing USA 979, took home the cup, winning by one point.

This year's Piana Cup Regatta started and restarted amid controversy. A general recall immediately followed the first gun when dozens of boats in the very aggressive fleet crossed the line at least ten seconds before the start gun. Many boats in the fleet were in the same position at the second start, but the race committee attempted this time to call back the boats with on-course starts. Several skippers who doubted the RC's visibility down the line ended their day filing requests for redress, some of which were successful.

Biscayne Bay had flat waters and moderate winds for the three races held on Saturday. The breeze slowly moved left on the fleet throughout the day, prompting regular minor adjustments by the RC. Getting off the line clean became critical in the overcrowded starts; boats that didn't have a nose at the line when the start gun went off found themselves quickly spit out the back of the fleet. Tim Hotchkiss got a nice lead in the first race that earned him the first bullet of the series. The Piana Cup winner, Hardesty, fought the current North American Champion, Dirk Kneulman, for the win in the second race, and ultimately took the gun.

The breeze came on at 15 to 20 knots out of the east for the second day of racing. Last year's world champion, Jud Smith, chose the right side of the course in the first race and banged a corner, which launched him first around the windward mark and ultimately first to the finish. The fleet became aggressive at the start of what would have been the second race, which resulted in a general recall and the threat of the Z flag for the last race of the day. The Piana cup win was determined by a duel between Hardesty and Smith, who finished 5th and 6th respectively, creating the one-point difference - after one score was dropped - that gave Hardesty the win.

The next regatta in the Jaguar Series will take place at the start of the New Year, January 5-6. Complete results for the Piana Cup, the notice of race, photos, and information about the upcoming events in the Jaguar Series are available on the Etchells Fleet 20 website at [www.etchellsfleet20.org](http://www.etchellsfleet20.org).

The International Etchells class, established in 1967, is comprised of dozens of fleets located around the world, including 34 fleets across North America. Almost 1400 boats have been built and sailed globally. For more information about the Etchells Class, visit the North American chapter's website at [www.etchellsna.org](http://www.etchellsna.org).