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Předmět: 29er SCM September Report
Datum: 1. října 2026 v 10:19
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Balaton 2026 – 29er EuroCup & Training Report

Training

The camp started on Sunday with unpacking and a short familiarisation session to get the boats ready, check the equipment and allow the sailors to adjust to the conditions.

The following three days brought strong winds of 18–25 knots. The main focus was on boat handling, speed and building confidence in heavy conditions, particularly for the younger and less experienced crews. We spent a lot of time simply sailing upwind and downwind, working on boat control, stability, trim and the ability to maintain speed in strong wind.

Andrej and Matyáš, together with Ela and Ema, showed outstanding progress. Both crews demonstrated excellent boat feel and technical ability. Particularly impressive was Ela, who, despite having only around six weeks of experience in the class, was already able to match and even outperform the boys in 25 knots. Their technical development and speed progression are very promising.

For the other crews, the conditions were significantly more challenging. Klara and Ifa, Lara and Matěj, as well as Kuba and Petr, were mostly focused on survival rather than speed development. In winds of up to 25 knots, their boat control was not yet sufficient to allow consistent upwind and downwind sailing. For these crews, the priority was basic handling, manoeuvres and learning how to manage the boat safely and efficiently in heavy conditions.

After two days of strong wind, Wednesday offered an opportunity to bring the group together for speed testing and practice races.

In the small training fleet with Hungarian teams, Andrej and Matyáš dominated, winning three out of four races and finishing second or third in the remaining one. This was a strong confirmation of their speed and technical level in heavy wind.

Dawid and Maciej Martan joined the group for the racing sessions rather than the preceding training days. Their performance revealed a clear lack of speed in heavy conditions. Despite their physical size, they were unable to fully exploit their weight advantage. We therefore focused on improving their trim and boat handling towards the end of the camp. The changes had a noticeable effect during the regatta.

Regatta

The regatta itself was sailed over two days, with no racing possible on the remaining two days due to a lack of wind.

Day 1 – South-Westerly Wind

The first racing day brought south-westerly wind coming from the direction from Tihany. The left side of the course was generally favoured, with significant gains available by correctly identifying and positioning for the shifts.

Ela and Ema had an excellent day. They showed very good observation, made intelligent tactical decisions and used their speed effectively in the flat-water conditions. Their performance was not based on recovering from poor positions but rather on consistently making good decisions throughout the races. Ela won her first race in an international fleet, an important milestone and a very positive sign of her development.

Dawid and Maciej Martan were similarly impressive. They achieved consistent top-three and top-five finishes throughout the day. Although they were not the fastest crew and their starts were not always particularly strong, they compensated with excellent positioning and the ability to use the shifts effectively. Their performance demonstrated that good tactical decisions and consistency can make a significant difference even without a clear speed advantage.

Klara and Ifa also showed some positive tactical qualities. Despite being among the slower crews, they regularly reached the first windward mark around the middle of the fleet. They were able to identify and use shifts reasonably well, and I have no major concerns about their tactical approach from this day. Their main limitations were boat speed, sail trim and downwind performance. They lost significant distance under gennaker, but their overall positioning and decision-making were encouraging.

The day was more difficult for Andrej and Matyáš. Their speed and starts were generally good, but they struggled to interpret the shifts and make appropriate tactical decisions. In several races, they sailed across shifts or continued too far towards the corners after the favourable phase had already ended. In one race, they started extremely well and reached the top mark around third, only to lose a large amount of distance downwind due to poor observation and positioning. The final race was better, with a fifth-place finish, but the day exposed a clear gap between their technical speed and their tactical awareness.

Lara and Matěj had a particularly difficult day. They were consistently slow and failed to establish themselves on the starting line. They repeatedly started from the left side and were forced to sail towards the right, despite the left side being favoured. When they managed to get into the race, their tactical choices were often too extreme, sailing too far towards the corners or failing to position themselves correctly relative to the shifts. Their lack of speed made it difficult to recover from these situations.

Overall, the first day showed that the ability to observe, interpret and position for wind shifts was decisive. While some crews managed to compensate for limited speed with good tactical sailing, others struggled to translate their technical ability into results.

Day 2 – Northerly Wind

The second day brought a typical northerly Balaton wind coming over the surrounding hills. Conditions started with stronger wind, reaching close to 20 knots in the first race, before gradually decreasing throughout the day.

Ela and Ema delivered one of the most impressive performances of the regatta in the first race. They started from the middle of the line, sailed towards the left side and made an excellent strategic decision. They reached the first windward mark approximately 300 metres ahead of most of the fleet, together with three other boats. They rounded second, took the lead downwind and remained first at the gate.

Unfortunately, a mistake at the final gate and finish prevented them from completing what should have been a race victory. Considering the quality of their sailing and the size of their lead, this was a particularly unfortunate error. Nevertheless, their speed in around 18 knots with some chop was exceptional. They were arguably the fastest crew on the water in these conditions.

As the wind decreased to around 12–15 knots, Dawid and Maciej Martan continued to show solid performance. Kuba Lojka, sailing with Wojciech Cebulka, also began to appear towards the front of the fleet as the conditions became lighter.

The final race offered a particularly interesting example of tactical sailing in light wind. Kuba Lojka, who was not competing in the race with his regular crew, managed to work his way through the fleet and win after initially being further back. His performance was based on intelligent positioning, observation and the ability to identify opportunities after the shifts. It was a strong demonstration of his natural tactical instincts and potential.

Ela and Ema finished around fifth in this race, but their performance also exposed some important areas for improvement. They had several situations involving right-of-way rules and insufficient observation, including an incident after a poor start when they tacked onto port and forced another boat to keep clear. A similar situation had already occurred several times during the regatta. There was also a near collision downwind with a boat sailing upwind, again caused by insufficient observation.

These incidents are understandable given Ela's limited experience in the class, but they are important reminders that boat speed and tactical ability must be supported by consistent fleet awareness and a clear understanding of right-of-way situations.

Lara and Matěj were leading the final race until the penultimate gate. However, they repeated a pattern already observed on the first day, sailing too far across the shifts and continuing towards the wrong side of the course. Once the shift ended, they were unable to recover their position and lost the lead.

Andrej and Matyáš were forced to retire after the first race of the regatta due to equipment failure. Their gennaker V-bridle broke and became tangled around the mast, effectively ending their participation after the first racing day.

Crew Analysis

Andrej and Matyáš

Their technical level and speed in strong wind were among the strongest in the group. They demonstrated excellent boat handling during training and dominated the practice races against the Hungarian teams.

However, the regatta exposed a significant gap in their tactical decision-making and observation. They

frequently failed to recognise when they were sailing in a favourable shift, continued too far towards the corners and lost opportunities by not positioning themselves relative to the rest of the fleet.

Their performance confirms that speed is no longer their main limitation. The next step is to improve tactical awareness, shift interpretation and the ability to make decisions independently under racing pressure.

Ela and Ema

The most positive development of the camp came from Ela and Ema. Their speed progression, boat feel and ability to make intelligent tactical decisions were exceptional, particularly considering Ela's very limited experience in the 29er.

Their performance in strong wind was particularly impressive. They were able to match or outperform much more experienced and physically stronger crews. Their first international fleet race victory was a significant milestone, and their near-win in the strong northerly conditions showed that they already have the potential to compete at the front.

The main areas for improvement are fleet observation, right-of-way situations and basic racing procedures. These are largely experience-related issues and should improve with more time in the class and exposure to international racing.

David Krizek and Maciej Martan

Their performance was one of the most consistent of the regatta. They demonstrated good tactical awareness, made effective use of the shifts and maintained positions in the top five despite not always having the speed advantage.

The main issue remains their boat speed in strong wind. Their physical profile should allow them to perform better in these conditions, but they need to develop a much stronger understanding of how to maintain speed independently. This includes recognising when the boat is fast or slow, adjusting sail trim, adapting to different wave patterns and developing a more precise feel for the boat.

Their results show that their tactical foundations are promising, but improving speed is essential if they want to compete consistently at the front.

Klara and Aoife

Their tactical performance on the first day was relatively positive, especially considering their limitations in speed. They were able to reach the first windward mark around the middle of the fleet and make reasonable decisions in the unstable wind.

However, their technical limitations remain substantial. Sail trim, depowering, trapeze work, stability and precise boat handling all require significant improvement. They often sailed with excessively deep and open sails, without making the necessary adjustments to control the power. Many of these tasks still require direct instructions from the coach rather than being performed independently.

Their downwind performance was also limited by poor observation and inefficient gennaker sailing. The priority should remain technical development and building independent boat-handling skills.

Lara and Matěj

Their performance highlighted similar technical limitations, particularly in boat handling and sail trim. Matěj still lacks basic knowledge of how to operate the kicker and trim the sails effectively. The crew is not yet sufficiently independent, and many basic actions still require instructions.

Their speed was poor throughout the regatta, and they struggled to establish good starting positions. Although Lara showed some ability to identify opportunities and occasionally reached the front of the fleet, repeated mistakes in shift interpretation and course positioning cost them significant distance.

Their next development phase should focus on fundamental boat handling, speed and independent decision-making before expecting consistent racing performance.

Kuba Lojka

Kuba showed promising tactical instincts, particularly in lighter conditions. His victory in the final race demonstrated his ability to read the shifts, find opportunities and move through the fleet through intelligent sailing.

In strong wind, however, his physical limitations create additional challenges. At his current weight, he depends heavily on his crew during manoeuvres and needs to develop a reliable system for maintaining control in overpower conditions. When something goes wrong, he may not have sufficient physical capacity to recover the boat independently.

His development should focus on manoeuvre technique, boat control and building a strong working relationship with his crew.

Main Conclusions and Priorities

The camp and regatta highlighted a clear difference in the current technical levels within the team.

Andrej and Matyáš, together with Ela and Ema, are currently operating at a very high level of boat handling and speed, particularly in strong wind. The progress of Ela was especially notable, showing how quickly a young sailor can develop when given sufficient training opportunities and the right environment.

For the remaining crews, the main priority is to improve boat handling and speed in conditions above 15–18 knots. At this stage, several crews are still unable to sail consistently upwind and downwind in strong wind, which limits their ability to work on more advanced racing skills.

Another common issue across the group is manoeuvre confidence around marks. Many crews approach gates and windward marks too cautiously, losing unnecessary distance and time during gennaker drops and hoists. They need to develop greater freedom and confidence in these situations, with the ability to execute manoeuvres precisely and aggressively even in strong wind.

Tactically, the regatta showed that good speed alone is not enough. The ability to observe shifts, understand their duration and position the boat correctly relative to the fleet was decisive. Some crews demonstrated strong tactical foundations, while others repeatedly sailed too far across shifts or failed to recognise opportunities in time.

The next training blocks should therefore focus on three main areas:

- Boat speed and control: developing a better feel for the boat, independent trim adjustments, wave adaptation and consistent speed in strong wind.
- Manoeuvres and mark roundings: building confidence and precision during gate roundings, gennaker drops and hoists, particularly in overpower conditions.
- Observation and tactical decisions: improving shift interpretation, fleet awareness and the ability to make timely decisions without relying on external instructions.

Overall, the Balaton camp was a valuable development opportunity. Despite the challenging conditions and limited racing, it provided a clear picture of each crew's current strengths and limitations. The progress of the younger sailors, particularly Ela and Kuba, was encouraging, while the more experienced crews now have clear technical and tactical priorities to address in their next training cycle.

Regards,

Marceli