

Thailand Kings Cup, December 2025

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Report from RPAYC Rear Commodore Yachting, Peter Farrugia

A few members made the recent trip to Phuket, Thailand, for the Kings Cup. The Kings Cup, as the name suggests, involves the Royal Family of Thailand. Her Majesty Queen Suthida Bajrasudhabimalalakshana is a regular and competitive sailor on Vayu, a TP52 representing Thailand. There was enormous interest surrounding the Queen's participation, adding to the energy and national pride of the event. Security was at a very high level with strong military and police presence, but ironically the likes of Griff and Michael Lockley who would turn up each day in sailing gear and simply stroll straight through the doors. Griff would say, "We are with the Queen." The security staff, much like the rest of us, had no idea what he meant, but they smiled and waved him in regardless.

Travelling members Steve McConaghy, Mark Griffith (owners), Peter Farrugia, Michael Lockley, Russell Murphy, Cliff Burke and Gene Clewett added to the Aftershock crew of 15. Mark Bayles also co-owners of the spectacular 60-foot yacht. Mark Tollhurst also owner and member of Rpayc didn't make this trip. A number of other guests filled the remaining spots and gelled well together for a great week of sailing. As the list of names suggests, there was certainly no shortage of humour. A favourite moment came at the start line:

Pete: "Griff, do you want me to ping the line with my watch?"

Griff: "No mate, feel the boat... be the boat."

The regatta began with the quirks of our sport on full display. Day one produced very light wind with only one race completed, The following day was much the same with a single race sailed, then no racing the next. Each afternoon, however, featured a presentation at a beautiful hotel with food and drinks included in a well-organised hospitality package.

It was at one of these presentation evenings that the 11-metre fleet invited our crew to their bar for a pool challenge. We turned up - but they were nowhere to be seen. All in bed by 9:30pm. Not quite the typical regatta hospitality of inviting guests to a party and then not attending! Michael responded, "That's the way we roll." They texted us saying, "Tell them you're a friend of Cliff's." The bar staff stared back and said, "Who's Cliff?" The pool table itself had more curves than the greens at Augusta.

The racing highlight came mid-week when the breeze filled to 7–9 knots. We hit our numbers perfectly and Macca placed us exactly where we needed to be, leading the TP52s at the top mark. We beat Vayu in both races and Hollywood once, taking a first and a second - the first time Aftershock has ever posted a race win against the TP52s.

As the week went on, the wind built steadily, with the final day producing 20+ knots. The TP52s were simply too fast downwind to hold off, but the racing throughout the week was excellent, a combination of windward-leeward and around-the-island courses. The team work grew stronger each day, especially with a mix of new sailors to the boat and even some new to the sport. Aftershock continues to offer a fantastic pathway for sailors to experience high-level regatta racing

on a truly spectacular yacht.

A notable RPAYC connection beyond Aftershock came from Peter Byford and Tim Byford, who were competing in the IRC division aboard Red Panda. Red Panda sailed a solid regatta and finished fourth overall in its class. It was great to see the Byfords flying the RPAYC flag in another division and catching up with them regularly throughout the week.

The final presentation was one to remember, with both His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida present to award the prizes. I was fortunate to be selected to accept our prize and had a brief conversation with the Royal couple during the group photo. It was also terrific to see so many Australians involved across the whole event, many of whom we race with regularly back home.