

Closer to the action than the sailors themselves....

A brief look at a new system that promises to change the way we view our races and events.

Big seas and winds gusting up to 30 knots are making for challenging racing, the salt spray is stinging faces

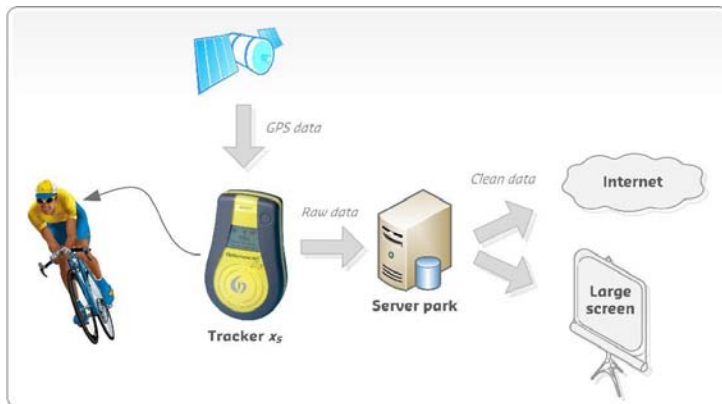
and as the boat tacks I see our grip on the lead halved only a mile from home. Skip's heart rate shoots up to 90 percent of maximum as the crew desperately tries to harness the powerful gusting winds, changing heading yet again. I'm excited, stressed and far more involved than I have any right to be and, in truth, there's nothing I can do to help from behind my laptop in the Red Lion. So, I decide that now would be a good time to see whether the exciting battle amongst the laser class boats has been settled or whether or not the stationary boat at the back of the field has been picked up by a safety craft; anything to take my mind off the nail biting live coverage of my chosen team's progress.

Two clicks on my browser window and I'm viewing just the one stranded boat and the rear safety, two more clicks and I've isolated the three boats in a mid course battle for the laser class honours. I can rewind the action, and watch live changes in the position, heading and speed of all the named teams. Yachting doesn't get more exciting than this, well, unless you're actually on the boat I guess.

So, how is this flight of fancy possible? The Tracker X5[®] unit and Spectator[®] software from timing and location specialists ChampionChip[®], provides the simple answer. Each boat (or



runner, cyclist, swimmer, kayak, rally car, the list goes on..) carries a small, lightweight X5 unit which uniquely identifies that person, team or vehicle and collects moment by moment positioning data via GPS.



In addition, the Tracker X5® can also collect data from ancillary devices such as heart rate monitors, crank revolution or temperature sensors. The unit then transmits this data to a

central storage point from where it is made available via a user friendly web page dedicated to, and customised for, that specific event. The data is overlaid onto map and satellite imagery (courtesy of Google of course) and this can then be accessed and watched live by anyone with an Internet connection. It is also perfectly suited to large screen display for spectator and press areas. In addition to live viewing; organisers, competitors and spectators can replay the event as often as they like at any speed they like, whenever they like. So once you're home, in the pub or preparing for your next event you can review the race to see when and where you or your rivals got things right or wrong!

However, this technology isn't just about drawing spectators into the real time excitement of races; it also enables an entirely new way of viewing and managing events as they happen. Organisers can see at a glance where the back markers are and the location of all their safety boats. They are able to see exactly when and where any participants go off course and always be one step ahead of the arrival of the leaders. They can even create more appeal for their event sponsors by accessing a whole new online audience through the branded Spectator® event viewer. Oh, and of course they can track competitors to the pub if they make a crafty liquid detour.

The X5 tracker system is managed and implemented in the UK by TDL limited, specialists in providing services to mass participation sporting events. For more information or to request a demonstration, visit www.tdl.ltd.uk or email tom.last@tdl.ltd.uk