

Frances Beebe at the ILCA World Championships in Qingdao, China



Sailing at the ILCA World Championships 2025

The ILCA World Championships 2025, held from May 12-17 in Qingdao, China, was my first-ever open World Championship, and it proved to be a challenging experience. Competing against some of the world's best sailors in such a prestigious event was a huge milestone in my sailing career. This regatta tested not only my sailing skills but also my mental toughness, adaptability, and resilience as I navigated the unpredictable conditions on the water.

The Venue: Qingdao, China

Qingdao, known for its rich sailing history and as the host of the 2008 Beijing Olympics sailing events, set the stage for an exceptional competition. The venue, located on the Yellow Sea, offered a unique blend of challenges—from light and shifting winds to strong tidal currents.

The regatta was scheduled during a new moon, which played a significant role in the first few days of the event. Due to the strong tidal currents created by the moon's gravitational pull, we were unable to race for the first four days. The current was too strong, and without at least 10 knots of wind, we simply couldn't sail against the tide. This unusual set of conditions was frustrating for all competitors, but it also served as a reminder of how factors beyond wind—like tides—can have a major impact.

The First Day: A Frustrating Start

The regatta's first day was a lesson in patience and the unpredictability of sailing. We started the first race under moderate winds, but as the race progressed, the wind died completely. By the time we reached the bottom mark, the current had become so strong that we were unable to round it, forcing the race to be abandoned.

Before the abandonment, however, I had a solid start and had rounded the top mark in 4th place. I was able to move to 3rd place on the downwind. While it was frustrating not to finish the

race, I was pleased with my performance in my first race at an open Worlds. Unfortunately, the wind never returned that day, and after waiting for hours with no breeze, we were finally sent in.



The Second and Third Day: Light Wind, Strong Current

Day two and three followed a similar pattern—lack of wind and strong currents. The race committee sent us out on the water, but despite our best efforts, there simply wasn't enough wind to overcome the powerful currents.

The Fourth Day: Sailing in Fog

Day four brought with it a completely new challenge: fog. Thick, low-hanging fog rolled in over the racecourse, reducing visibility to such an extent that at times, you could barely make out the pin end of the start line from the race committee boat.

The race officer set the course perfectly, ensuring it was geometrically accurate. This would have allowed us to use our compass' to find the marks. However, these angles did not take into account the effects of the current whilst sailing, so I was very grateful that racing didn't go ahead. I am not sure I would have been able to find the marks!

Day Five: Racing at Last

Day five marked a significant turning point in the regatta, as we finally managed to get three races underway. The wind conditions were variable, providing a mix of challenges but also a chance to get into the rhythm of racing.

- First race: The wind was around 10 knots, and I rounded the top mark around mid-fleet. I was able to gain a few boats on the downwind and held that position for the rest of the race, finishing in 17th place.
- Second race: The wind dropped slightly to around 8 knots, but thankfully the current had started decreasing as we reached low tide. I had a strong start and rounded the top mark in 2nd place, which felt like a huge accomplishment. Unfortunately, I was a bit slow on

the downwind, so the fleet caught up, and then I sailed the wrong way on the next upwind which pushed me back to a finishing position of 23rd.

- Third race: The wind continued to decrease, dropping to approximately 4 knots by halfway through the third race. After a terrible start, I got lucky that I was forced to the correct side of the course, and managed to round the top mark forward of mid-fleet. However, on the second upwind, I misunderstood how the current had shifted and struggled to get back towards the top mark, causing me to fall back to 31st.

Despite the challenging conditions, the three races gave us a lot more optimism for this regatta constituting a series. Even though the light winds posed their own set of challenges, I was able to push through some tough moments, and I was happily surprised by the outcomes.

Day Six: The Final Push

Day six brought a huge northerly breeze, giving us conditions that most of the fleet had not expected for this regatta. There were major wind shifts and gusts, which made racing extra challenging.

- Fourth race: I capsized very early on the first upwind, putting me behind the majority of the fleet, but I managed to hike hard and round the top mark around mid-fleet. I then had another capsize on the reach, which pushed me back again, though my second upwind brought me back to a finish in 19th place.
- Fifth race: There was a major wind shift off the start line, but I managed to hold my position through it, which set me up for a top mark rounding in the top 10 boats. I fought forward to 6th place on the second upwind and lost a couple of boats on the final downwind, leaving me in 8th place.
- Sixth race: After a great start, I rounded the top mark in 2nd place, and I moved into 1st place on the downwind. On the next upwind leg, I dropped back to 2nd place, and dropped back to 4th place on the final downwind, which I held for the finish.

The final day of racing provided a thrilling conclusion to the event. The northerly breeze added an exciting challenge that tested my sailing skills to the limit. Despite the initial struggles in the first race, my ability to recover and finish strong in that race, and the following races was a testament to my resilience throughout the regatta.

Final Results: A Strong Finish in 28th Place

After six days of waiting and finally racing in a range of conditions, I finished the regatta in 28th place. This result was far higher than I had hoped, so I am very proud to see my hard work paying off. It was an incredible learning experience and one that I will carry forward in my sailing journey.

Thank-You

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