

Calm before the storm

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THEY may have had a break on shore yesterday, but Singapore's sailors will be raring to go when they take to the water once more.

The International 420 World Championships in Haifa Israel resumes today after a day's rest, with 11 races taking place over the course of the next four days to determine the world champions.

Positions from qualifying will be converted into points to form a 12th score for the finals series – with the best 10 scores taken to judge placing.

Four of the five boats from Singapore's contingent have qualified for the Gold fleet, which will see them pit their skills against the top halves of the regatta.

Justin Liu and Sherman Cheng, who finished third in the qualifiers, will be the Republic's sole representatives in the Gold fleet of the open category as they bid to bring home the nation's first-ever men's 420 world title.

Meanwhile, all three ladies pairs will vie for top honours in the ladies Gold fleet, with Rachel Lee and Cecilia Low best placed for glory having also finished third.

The sailors have worked hard to earn their rest, indulging in some shopping and bowling yesterday evening at a local mall.

Liu told the New Paper over the phone: "It's a nice break before the next few days of racing. Things will start getting interesting from here."

Liu and Cheng, both 19, got off to a good start, although 16th and 12th place finishes in their third and fifth races saw them finish third overall.

"We had two bad starts," said Liu. "We went behind early and we were simply on the back foot for the rest of the race."

The wind conditions have also blown proceedings wide open in Haifa.

"It's tricky out there with the shifty winds," Liu said.

"We just have to stick to the basics and do our best, taking each day as it comes. I think anyone from the top 15 can win it."

On the ladies' side, Low indicated that the camp was in a good mood, although the rest and relaxation would not be an excuse for complacency.

"Everyone's just relaxing and getting their mind off sailing," said Low.

"It will be different once racing starts again. We're all up for it."

No pair has dominated outright in the ladies category and although she expects a tight race for the title, Low has pinpointed a few nations that stand in their way.

Said the 19-year-old Republic Polytechnic student: "The top few were separated by only one point each (in qualifying).

"However, there are a few strong pairs from the France, Italy and Brazil – they're pretty fast.

"We'll just have to do our best and see how it goes."