

THE AMERICA'S CUP COMES HOME

[EW: Rosalind stole the keys! Awesome!!! Uh. Ut oh.]

Looks like Mom and Dad have been so consumed with all-things NSA they went and left the keys to the joint right out in the open. I better write fast.

8-1.

One week ago the America's Cup standing stood at New Zealand eight wins, USA one (they actually had three, but more on that later), with first team to reach nine the champion. Everyone – *everyone* – hoped the US boat could eke out a couple more wins before the Kiwis got that inevitable last win and took the Cup back home. Oracle skipper Jimmy Spithill had other plans, calmly proclaiming his team focused on winning not just the next race, but the Cup itself. The World politely smiled and nodded, while rolling our eyes. *Dude, c'mon, you'd need to reel off eight sudden death wins in – a – row.*

I attended the Opening Weekend races and watched New Zealand take 3 out of 4, but what I saw in those races should've prepared me for the amazing feat Oracle was about to pull off. The US boat could've won two more of those opening races if not for some bad tactical decisions and poor boat handling during key tacks and gybes. The Kiwis had the faster boat upwind, but Oracle was faster downwind. If they could improve the tactical and stabilize the maneuvers, they had a real chance to get back into things.

They replaced the tactician with 5-time Olympian Ben Ainslie, got the new crew in sync, made tweaks to the boat night after night, and started to win. Every race. Every day. The World stopped smirking and the thousands along the San Francisco waterfront went wild as the US boat now stretched out its leads on the upwind legs thanks to whatever engineering tweak magic the

techs had made.

(A moment to address the, uh, cheating thing: Oracle started the series in the hole -2 races due to a cheating incident with their AC45 boat in an earlier series. I can't believe they were so stupid, and they deserve what they got, which was a 2 point race penalty, and the removal of their wing trimmer four days before the start of the series. Add in Oracle owner billionaire Larry Ellison's uncanny ability to come off like a Bond Villain sent straight from central casting, and well, it can lead to rather fantastical musings – "That's it! An Oracle sub with a magnet pulled the US boat upwind!")

In today's final the Kiwis got the jump at the start, rounding the first mark ahead while Oracle buried their bow and dropped their speed. They recovered, gave chase and took the lead, which New Zealand grabbed back, then USA pulled ahead. And then came Leg 4, a downwind leg, and Oracle put on their jets, shifted into a whole new gear and left the Kiwis almost 700 meters behind. From there the US boat just had to stay in one piece.

My sailing friends and I have long dreamed of an America's Cup series on the San Francisco Bay, and the reality has surpassed even our highest hopes. A gorgeous natural amphitheatre, miles of shoreline to watch up close, scary-fast boats that fly across the water and along the waterfront, so close the crowd and crew are able to feed off each others energy.

I celebrate the Oracle team for pulling off one of the most incredible sporting comebacks in history. I salute the New Zealand team for a great run and the Kiwi fans for being the nicest, funniest, fervent fans this side of Middle Earth.

And I raise a toast to the City of San Francisco and the America's Cup Organization for showing what a true public and private partnership can reap, how beautiful public spaces can be used to great effect and benefit for the public.

To the thousands of fans who flocked to the City, and the happy hotel owners and cafe managers and taxi drivers et al, meet you back here in a few years!