

54th Heron National Championship Regatta - Sailing Report.

Perth Dinghy Sailing Club 2012/13

Racing for the 54th Nationals was held in Matilda Bay on the Swan River in Perth, WA. The regatta started in a heatwave, with lighter breezes the order of the day. Wind strengths increased as the regatta progressed. However, the Fremantle Doctor – the true sea breeze – only appeared on a couple of days. There were significant wind shifts on most days of racing and also variation in wind strength over the course. These factors ensured that strong tactical sailing as well as boat speed was required to do well.

The water in Matilda Bay was choppy in the stronger breezes, especially in the shallower water near the sea walls under King's Park and in the area towards the Freeway Bridge. Several boats came to grief in this chop on the square runs, and it was best to clear the choppy water as soon as possible on the works.

33 boats greeted the starter. The series was sailed without a single general recall, surely a first for the class! Starts were generally clean and even on well laid lines of suitable length.

The eternal question of left, right or middle generally yielded the answer of left. The pressure seemed to come out of the left, combined with a port lift, on most days. Going left also meant clearing the chop of the sea walls. Occasionally, boats benefited from starboard lifts deeper in towards Crawley, but in general, the left held sway. This was no clearer than in the last heat, when the top five boats in the regatta went left, and virtually everyone else went right. The top boats emerged with nearly half a leg lead after the first work and maintained a large gap to the rest of the fleet for the rest of the race.

A consequence of the advantage to the left was that many boats approached the windward mark on port tack and tacked within the three length zone. This led to a number of protest calls as starboard tackers were infringed. Sailors need to be very sure of their responsibilities when approaching a port hand mark on port tack!

For the first time, six heats were sailed in a shorter windward/leeward format, with a gate at the leeward mark. These races were long enough to separate the fleet into pecking order. However, the shorter format did create some interesting mark rounding scenarios. The downwind finishes also introduced new perspectives and emphasised the need to keep clear air and get into wind pressure when running square. Several incidents at the finishes also demonstrated that it is important to understand the rules of right of way and room at the finish line when finishing downwind.

The series was dominated by Brien and Rosie Hennessy (WA) in 10272 O For Awesome (timber), which was launched when leaving the beach for the invitation race. They won seven of the ten heats, in a range of conditions. In addition, they were leading in two other heats when misfortune struck – a broken tiller in heat six and a capsize (with subsequent holing of a side tank) in heat eight. 10272 excelled to windward, with height and speed that the fleet could not match. In their home waters, Team Awesome usually went the right way and covered well when threatened. 10272 was rigged with a Bermudan mast and standard jib.

Runners up David, Lachlan, Thomas and Henry Johnson (Qld) in their new GRP boat 10269 Heronasaurus ominously won the invitation race, but took time to get going when the real racing started. In the lighter air at the beginning of the regatta, 10269 seemed off the pace. A tenth and then a rare RAF in heats five and six piled on the pressure. However, 10269 flew in the heavier winds of the last four heats of the regatta. 10269 was rigged with a Bermudan mast and standard jib.

Third place went to SA veteran Richard Gibson crewed by Hannah Lees in 10232 Flaw Show (timber). 10232 sailed with a Bermudan mast and genoa. This was Richard's best Nationals result in a number of years – sailing at minimum weight for the bigger headsail for the first time may have helped. 10232 won heat five in light conditions after a rare starboard lift at the top of the first work and generally sailed consistently between third and sixth place throughout the regatta.

Reigning champions Greg Harris and Kai Johnston (NSW) also campaigned a new GRP boat, 10271 Slippery When Wet, which was rigged with a Bermudan mast and standard jib. 10271 had a slow start to the regatta in the lighter airs, but upped the ante with several second places in heavier winds. An unfortunate downwind capsize just short of the line in heat 8 probably cost 10271 a top three finish overall.

The boat that finished second last year when steered by Paul Armstrong, 9957 Appauled (timber), finished fifth at this regatta, piloted by Jason Groves and Ashley Brewin (NSW). Jason used the sails off 10101 (standard jib) and a gunter rig. 9957 did not finish a race worse than seventh, but could not string together sufficient top places to break through, especially in the shorter race format. 9957 often benefited from going left....and then going left again! Rumour has it that Jason will be back in a new GRP boat to challenge next year.

The top six was rounded out by NSW veteran Dave McLean and Rebecca Nash in 10184 Grumpier (GRP). 10184 carried a Bermudan rig and genoa. 10184 sailed consistently and was unlucky not to win heat six, in which she was passed by two other boats in a cruel shift in the last 100 metres or so.

Other boats generally found it hard to break into the top placings. 7184 Sobraon (John Nobbs and Katrina Swavelly Qld gunter/genoa) cracked a win in the fickle nor wester of heat six after capsizing to windward in a huge shift earlier in the race, and finished second in heat two. Nick Smith and Thom Hardman (NSW) sailing the borrowed 10130 Raphael (gunter/standard jib) claimed a second in heat six, but could not repeat this effort in other races. Ian and Emma Milton in 10264 Special FX (NSW, Bermudan/genoa) were sailing heavy and did well in stronger airs, especially to windward, but struggled a little off the breeze as lighter crews did better.

As usual, there were races within races and boats duelled with each other throughout the fleet.

The fleet carried a predominance of Bermudan rigs, and this was no more evident than in the top six boats, where only one boat carried a gaff. However, it cannot be said with any certainty that the Bermudan rig was the cause of success, as there were many boats down the fleet with a one piece stick. This was the third regatta in which the genoa has been allowed, and it seems that the weight penalty and area of the sail are well balanced for even competition with boats with a standard jib. Two genoas made it into the top six, but the sail did not turn average boats into rocket ships.

Race management by PDSC and associated officials was generally excellent, and the safety boat fleet was well marshalled. Thanks again to all the volunteers that gave their time so that we could enjoy our sailing.

Richard Gibson



10269 and 10232 slug it out to the finish line
Perth Dinghy Sailing 2012/13



Rigging area, PDSC

28	10157	Cirrus	Spencer/Andrew Spencer	251	192	26(26)	26(26)	18(18)	27(27)	30	29	22(22)	18(18)	27(27)	28(28)
29	9741	Hardy Har Har	Andrew Hardman/Rachael Hardman	283	218	31	28(28)	29(29)	30(30)	28(28)	28(28)	25(25)	[34](DNF)	23(23)	27(27)
30	10243	Rockin Robin	Iain Kane (V)/Jack Hanrahan	293	225	30(30)	25(25)	34(DNC)	25(25)	26(26)	27(27)	34(DNS)	[34](DNS)	[34](DNC)	24(24)
31	10238	Take Two	Stephen Gallager/Luke Gallager	296	231	28(28)	31(31)	28(28)	29(29)	31(31)	31	29(29)	26(26)	[34](DNF)	29(29)
32	9770	Microwave	Jeremy Brown/Lachlan Brown	311	245	32(32)	32(32)	31(31)	[34](DNF)	32(32)	32	30(30)	27(27)	30(30)	31(31)
33	10201	Panic	Georgia Lewis (L)/Latisha Cook	321	253	27(27)	30(30)	30(30)	34(DNS)	34(DNS)	30(30)	34(DNS)	34(DNS)	[34](DNC)	[34](DNC)

*This Report was generated by [The Finishing Line](#) Race Results Software Version 2.18.4
last updated on 5/01/2013
By System Administrator*