

## 52<sup>nd</sup> Skate National Championship at Toronto, NSW

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The 2009 National Skate Titles attracted boats from Perth, Sydney and Lake Macquarie. The series was contested at the popular Toronto Sailing Club on beautiful Lake Macquarie. Over the last ten years there has been a robust contest between the NSW and the WA sailors and this National Title was no different, with four different heat winners and the final placings only decided on the results of the last race. In the final wash-up a NSW boat again took the prize.

Class veterans Garry Caporn and Mick Forbes sailing "CBF" came to Toronto hoping for strong breezes to defend the title they won on their local water at South of Perth YC last year. St George SC sailors David Luck and Glenn Crichton sailing "Any Which Way" were hoping to regain the title they had conceded to their Perth based rivals the year before. These two crews have dominated the racing over the last decade having won seven of the last ten titles between them.

In spite of their past dominance, the results of the 2009 titles were anything but a foregone conclusion. The class has retained many excellent sailors and attracted new talent because of the sheer exhilaration of sailing these high performance boats and the close friendships that have developed over years. Skate class friendships have been built on shared sailing adventures in exotic and out of the way places like Geraldton, Kangaroo Island, Busselton and Hervey Bay. Next year's Nationals will give the Skate fraternity their first experience of sailing in Tasmania.

Leading into the Toronto titles, it seemed that a number of boats had a good chance of unseating the two favorites. Several local lake boats were seen as having short odds due to local knowledge and expertise in the lighter shifty breezes that are common on Lake Macquarie at this time of year. Peter Scott, chief organizer for the titles sailing "The Welshie II" with daughter Tegan was seen as an outsider with a good chance. Another campaigner that looked good on paper before the racing began included class legend Max Sellars and international crew Christian Dunn sailing "Double Decker Dog".

Gavin Caporn (son of Garry) and Luke Parsons from Perth sailing "Cho Kon It" also looked to have a very good chance of finally knocking off the older crews. "Posessed" sailed by Peter Sullivan and John Jefferson also looked like hot prospects, sporting wings and twin trapeze configuration. All of the other Skates had stuck with the twin leaning board configuration for which the class is renowned.

Always in with a chance was St George SC based boat "Never Give 'n Inch" sailed by John (Dad) Grant and rock star crew David Crawford. Past Champions Brett Fannon (sailing Tasty Fish with son Cameron) and Mick Winney (sailing Take It Easy with Emma Sills) were also considered possible contenders.

The series got off to a flying start with the Invitation Race being called off due to the threat of very strong winds and electrical storms which had hit towns south of Toronto.

**Heat 1** was sailed in light to moderate winds and saw defending champion Garry Caporn demonstrate his credentials. Second spot was filled by the ever consistent Double Decker Dog with Tasty Fish in third spot. After rounding the windward mark for the first time, Any Which Way had an altercation with Cho Kon It which resulted in both boats losing many places from which neither boat really properly recovered.

**Heat 2** was sailed in light and shifting breezes which tested the skills and the patience of all competitors. Picking and working the many small wind shifts gave Any

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Which Way a satisfying win after the previous day's disappointing 10th. Second place went to CBF with Double Decker Dog in third spot.

**Heat 3** was sailed about two hours after Heat 2 in the same kind of variable, light and puffy conditions as the earlier race. This race saw WA youngsters Cho Kon It demonstrate the light weather speed and tactical sailing that has won them a Junior National Title and a runner-up placing on at least one previous occasion. Any Which Way clocked a second and Double Decker Dog kept the pressure on with another third placing. CBF had to be satisfied with a forth placing.

The traditional New Year's day Skippers versus Crews cricket match has been replaced with a "teams" barefoot bowing contest. This great family day was held at the Toronto Workers Club and was a roaring success. In the end the Skippers retained their title and the 2010 re-match is eagerly waited by all.

**Heat 4** was sailed in moderate to fresh winds which allowed former junior national champion Gavin Caporn sailing Cho Kon It to finally show the fleet has potential. Second place yet again went to Any Which Way with Double Decker Dog happy to book another third place. Once again CBF filled the forth placing.

**Heat 5** was sailed in light conditions which sorely tested the patience of many crews. The fortunes of many boats was decided by the breeze. Being in the right place at the right time really does help some times. Tasty Fish slipped home on a "lucky" breeze ahead of Any Which Way and Double Decker Dog (again).

**Heat 6** was sailed in slightly fresher conditions two hours after Heat 5. Tasty Fish cleared out to an impressive lead reasonably early in the race, demonstrating the skills and boat speed that delivered him the title in 2001. Sporting a gybing centerboard (copied from the 14ft Skiff Class) the boat certainly showed good speed. Any Which Way logged yet another second place with Double Decker Dog carding her fifth third place in the series. Consistency wins National Titles!

The traditional winery bus trip occurred on the Sunday which involved visits to a number of Hunter Valley wineries as well as the famous Paddy McGuire's Pub and the Chocolate Factory.

**Heat 7** was delayed for about an hour until the breeze had finally filtered in from the South East. As the boats left the shore, it was not clear whether the breeze would "fill in" and deliver a really good test for the final race or whether it would be another moderate breeze. As things turned out, the breeze did not really strengthen above about 12-15 knot range which was enough for some close racing but not enough to satisfy the preferences of the Perth contingent.

The race was fought out between Any Which Way, CBF, Cho Kon It, Tasty Fish and Double Decker Dog. The lead and the minor places changed many times as the race progressed. With only a seven point lead going into the final race, Any Which Way could not afford a placing worse than third if CBF was to win. It was a very close race and one that will be remembered by all for the tight tactical maneuvering. In the end, the result was decided on the last beat to the finish.

CBF was leading and headed out to the left side of the course followed by Cho Kon It. Any Which Way and Tasty Fish took the right hand side seeking more wind pressure. When the four boated re-converged it was an Americas Cup duel which in

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the end was won by Any Which Way. Cho Kon It locked up second place and CBF squeezed home in third place.

Glenn Crichton

### **Results**

- 1. Any Which Way - D. Luck/G. Crichton (NSW) 10-1-2-2-2-2-1**
- 2. CBF - G. Caporn/M. Forbes (WA) 1-2-1-4-4-4-3**
- 3. Double Decker Dog - M. Sellars/C. Dunn (NSW) 2-3-3-3-3-3-5**
- 4. Tasty Fish - B. Fannon/C. Fannon (WA) 3-10-5-6-1-1-4**
- 5. Cho Kon It - G. Caporn/L. Parsons (WA) 5-4-4-1-8-8-2**
- 6. Never Give 'N Inch - J. Grant/D. Crawford (NSW) 4-7-DNF-5-7-7-11**
- 7. Possessed - J. Jefferson/P. Sullivan (NSW) 6-9-12-DNF-5-6-10**
- 8. Grey Ghost - K. Sinton/C. Sinton (NSW) 12-7-9-9-6-9-7**
- 9. Whisper - N. Ryan/A. Beattie (NSW) 11-DNF-7-8-12-11-6**
- 10. Take It Easy - M. Winney/E. Sills (NSW) 9-6-8-12-13-14-14**