



65th SKATE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Spanner's Race Reports



If you want the inside story behind the results for each Nationals heat you'll find it here in Alan "Spanner" Spencer's Race Reports.

Heat 1 – Saturday 30 December 2023

The briefing for the series commenced at 11am on 30th December 2023 at EFYC. Due to the water being double booked the race committee decided a windward/leeward course was the best option for the Invitation Race/Heat 1 to avoid any conflict with other Clubs. Luckily for the Skates the other classes had either finished or not required the water east of Point Walter bank which gave us exclusive use for the afternoon.

Race 1 was scheduled for a 2pm start but due to the shifting SE breeze at 5 - 10 knots and the outer start mark needing to be corrected due to wind change a postponement flag was raised for approx 15mins.

Once the fleet got away it was anyone guess at which side of the course to take. Patto 972 reached the top mark first closely followed by Silvio 937 with Huddy 945 3rd and Simmo 980 4th.

A tricky Kite leg prevailed with numerous tacks downhill with the breeze shifting constantly. Unfortunately I didn't see who had made ground and who lost out at the bottom gate as I was on the support boat at the top mark. We were monitoring the windshifts at the top mark and the Race Control Officer (Helen Suriano) confirmed we needed to drop the change of direction Bouy and replace the top mark because of a 30 degree shift.

Patto had to contend with the breeze shifting further South as he neared the new top mark, only to watch all the others get the southerly at bit earlier at start to 2 sail reach to the mark while he had to tack back a couple of times to keep his advantage. He rounded the new top mark 1st and went for his kite only to have to pull it back down about 200m later, Silvio was 2nd and followed Patto with his kite up only to have to do the same and drop it. Huddy was 3rd and Brett 4th with Byron Renfrey 941 in 5th who immediately gybed after the mark and 2 sailed back towards the gate. Patto & Silvio had tighter reaching back towards the gate.

Meanwhile the change in wind direction kept going South West so Race control decided to shorten the course at the last gate with the finish at the start/finish boat. At the finish it was Patto, Huddy, Brett , Silvio then Byron. Patto also took out the Invitation race honours. 10 boats finished but we had 1 retirement in Matt Ferris 973 who broke a tiller. Overall a good start to the series.

Heat 2 – Sunday 31 December 2023

Well, what started out as a relatively gentle SW breeze at 10 -15 knots suddenly turned into a ripper 20-30 knot buster, after getting soaked on the support boat laying the bouys, I said to Ross, this is bullshit, I'm glad all the legends are sailing in this! With 5 previous national champions in the race it was going to be amazing.



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We did a quick check on Shirl who was fixing his kite sheets on Chidley point before the race and watched Brett capsizing to try and fix his kite chute, before heading back to the top mark to watch the race.

What a race it was! Capsize, capsize, capsize did I mention capsize, then windshift, windshift, windshift did I mention windshift. gusts, knocks, gusts, knocks, gusts, you get the drift. but I wont let the truth get in the way of a good story for some, a sad day for others.

In a sedate 15 knot breeze the Skate fleet got away on a windward/leeward course. It was fabulous watching the Skates having to work the shifts upwind to the top mark criss-crossing each other all the way, A dubious short cut was noted by one of the competitors not going around a deep water spit post at the end of Point Walter bank. I thought naughty naughty.

Anyway, 1st to the top mark was Brett 984 who had another issue with his kite chute, enough for him to subsequently head home and retire, meanwhile 2nd was Huddy 945, then Ken 969, Patto 972, Simmo 980, Byron 941, Silvio 937, Matt 973, Paul 978 & Pete 932. Huddy just powered away downhill to the gate.

This continued to the top mark the 2nd time with Huddy rounding 1st, Ken 2nd and a magnificent effort from Byron and Col into 3rd place, next was Matt, Patto, Pete, Paul, Simmo then Silvio in last place (remember this position)!!! On this leg the breeze really picked up to 20 - 25 Knots with massive bullets coming through, survival was becoming prevalent and it showed the men from the boys.

At the top mark the 3rd time it was Huddy by a country nautical mile then Patto and Silvio showing some form after the others in front of him hit the piss on the downhill leg, next was Matt, Ken, Paul, Pete then Byron, Simmo was heading for home to retire after a prolonged capsize.

Lap 4 and the action starts to hot up, Huddy rounds the top mark way in front, with the others lamenting in his wake. He throws up the kite and heads off to the left for what appears to be a forgone conclusion to finish, but fate has a way of appearing at the worst time, on the gybe he hits the piss not once but 5 times in his efforts to win, Patto who was in 2nd place with kite up also goes left and continues to gain on Huddy who has just got going again on a 2 sail, Patto goes further but drops his kite early before the gybe and starts a tighter 2 sail reach to the finish line.

Meanwhile the plot thickens as, in a Steven Bradbury moment, Silvio And Mick have rounded the top mark in 3rd and go right with the Kite up and motoring toward the finish line they snatch victory from the jaws of defeat from Patto by 2 secs followed closely by a deflated Huddy and Bodhi in 3rd, 4th place goes to Ken, then Paul, Pete then Byron, Not sure what happened to Matt Ferris but he was towed back and I assume he retired. It was fantastic sailing by all concerned.

Special mention to all the start and support boat crews who helped with the towing of the stricken craft.



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Have a Happy New Year to All

PS: Check out Ironbark Photos on facebook for Skate sailing footage and please subscribe to Lindsey Preece's page. He just loves taking skate footage. You'll find video footage of Heat 2 and photos of Heat 1.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1957909027766518/user/100014023759223/>

Heat 3 – Tuesday 02 January 2024

Easterlies certainly make it an interesting start to the afternoon.

We had a shifting SSE breeze that caused a number of course changes trying to get it right. We had an opportunity to get further up the river into Melville water west to try and make it a better solution for all.

After a slight postponement the race got away off Flying Squadron heading to the top mark in the Attadale foreshore.

Brett 984 was quick off the start in the changing shifts and got to the top mark 1st followed by Huddy 945, Matt 973, Ken 969, Patto 972, Silvio 937, Byron 941, Pete 932, Paul 978, Simmo 980 and then Alex 946.

The next lap I didn't have time to record the boats because we were busy preparing for a wind change and dropping the change of direction bouy. I think this caused a bit of confusion with some, but eventually the sailors could get to the new bouy and round it successfully. Unfortunately for Paul he got his centreplate caught up in the anchor line.

On the last gate Brett had an issue getting his kite down and Patto snuck in and beat him to the finish line, whilst Huddy was 3rd, Ken 4th, Silvio 5th, Matt 6th, Byron 7th, Simmo 8th, Paul 9th, Alex 10th and Pete 11th.

Heat 4 – Wednesday 03 January 2024

It was reunion day with lots of Nedlands sailors turning up thanks to Ann & Kevin Shugg getting the invite out to the masses. SoPYC were also well represented with the ex-legends along with some older EFYC Skate sailors coming out of the wood work.

A special mention to our major sponsors MGP Property and Jandakot Heli-Co along with Rod Beurteaux, and our race 4 sponsor SV Glass. Your support is really appreciated by the Skate Class. The Crowd on the Balcony were amazed at the action on the water, I was led to believe we had a bigger crowd on the Balcony than what they get at Rumble in the Reach, well done to all.



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Now onto the race.

Well it was action a-plenty watching from the balcony at EFYC the 4th heat of the series. A windward/Leeward course was set in front of the club ,on a SSE course at 15 -20 knots.

The first work produced interesting racing in the shifting breeze. At the top mark it was Ken 969, Steve 945, Silvio 937, Byron 941, Patto 972, Ray 980, Brett 984, Paul 978, Pete 932 then Matt 973, Alex appeared to be struggling in the gusty breeze and retired early.

Ken maintained his lead throughout the next lap with the shifty gusting conditions playing havoc with the fleet, numerous capsizes were occurring throughout the race. With the wind shifts occurring frequently it proved a real test to the finish, with Huddy snatching the win from Ken then the old veteran Simmo coming in 3rd.

It was amazing to hear that Byron had assisted Mick when Silvio had a medical issue on the water. As such a redress was instigated as Byron then retired from the race. A great effort for both Mick & Byron and I award them Hero status. Special mention to Jane Gunnell for her nursing experience and effort to take control of the situation on the support boat and bring Silvio to shore where her knowledge was invaluable until the ambulance arrived.

Heat 5 – Friday 05 January 2024

I'm going to tell you a story.

There we were on support 1 happily leaving the club about 12:30pm, ever enthusiastic Ross Mack skipper ably supported by myself (Spanner) for the uninitiated as crew. We head to the area predicted to be where we were to lay the top mark and take a reading. its blowing in a SE direction.

I look on WillyWeather on my phone and yep the sea breeze is in at Garden Island. I then know that it will be on the course in about 20mins and that we were generally in the right spot near Lucky Bay boy.

The start boat with Helen as the RCO on board got us to confirm the wind bearing a few times, and guess what we were right. Drop the bouy she said, and once set, away we go to the bottom end of the line to put in the gate. The gate bouys needed some fine adjustment to shorten the ropes so the competitors didn't run over them, and we were done, or so we thought,

Support 2 had an issue with the outer pin, Helen radios can we help shorten the outer pin rope as it is trailing out across the start line, we spring into action once again, pulling up the pin and tie up the excess rope before redropping the pin. Gee we're good!! We then head off back to the top mark to watch the race. Who said the role of the course laying boat is boring.

Now, does anyone want me to talk about the racing ?

It was a boring race in a 15 -20 knot SW sea breeze with gusts to about 25knots. Boring my ar,,!



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The fleet got up and away and in typical Melville Water West conditions. Most sailors headed toward the Applecross side of the course hoping to catch that magical southerly lift but in typical fashion it knocked halfway up the first work and the leaders were then forced to tack back, while those who had gone further into shore earlier managed to find the magical lift.

Matt 973 was 1st to the top mark followed by Patto 972, then Byron 941 (I always said that was a fast boat), Huddy 945, Brett 984, Gavin Caporn 937 (filling in for Silvio), Pete 932, Paul 978, Simmo 980, Ken 969, but the boys on Fish Lolly headed for home.

The downhill run was spectacular, with the skates powering down the river, the little clacker valves were twitching all the way, you could just anticipate the sphincter tightening on every gybe and then someone would do the wobbles and hit the piss.

At the top mark the 2nd time it was Huddy, Brett, Byron (did I tell you that was a fast boat), Matt, Patto, Ken, Paul, Gavin and then Simmo. 946 & 932 had retired at this stage.

Another spectacular kite run had us salivating in the support boat.

Then the last lap and up at the top mark, Patto had pulled a blinder along the Applecross foreshore whilst Brett & Huddy had tacked earlier and got caught in a slight wind change Matt was out there with Patto and gained heaps of ground. Byron was right behind him (what a fast boat), Kenbar was next then Gavin, Paul and Simmo carrying on not to be defeated.

With asanother great kite run down the middle, there was some magnificent rides had by all. Really makes you appreciate the skill of all on board.

Patto once again getting the chocolates followed by Brett then Steve.

Great day on the water.

Heat 6 – Saturday 06 January 2024

We were back on Melville Water West in slightly lighter conditions for the start of heat 6. The SW breeze filtered in at 10 - 12 knots on flatter water.

The start was once again off Perth Flying Squadron with the top mark near Lucky Bay bouy. Most of the fleet choosing to go left with only the couple of false starters going right.

Once again it was prevalent to keep coming to shore to pick up that magical southerly lift that occurs on the Alfred Cove foreshore. Anyone who tacks early puts themselves into the swinging shifts in the middle of the river.

The first work had Patto 972 lead at the top mark closely followed by Brett 984, then Steve 945, Ken 969, Gavin 937, Byron 941 (still a fast boat), Alex 946, Simmo 980, Matt 973 , Paul 978 and Pete 932 in last place. Although the 1st downhill leg was impressive the lighter breeze didn't produce the same extreme action as the day before.



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The 2nd work was interesting as Patto decided to tack up the middle of the course contrary to every one else staying to the Alfred Cove shore. This was costly as Brett powered up the shore to take command of the race. Huddy also beat Patto to the top mark and the both of them had a massive battle down hill as the breeze freshened. Gavin & Mick were next followed by Byron (in that fast boat that I used to own that I bought off lucky real Cheap!) Kenbar had made up some ground with Matt right behind him. Paul was next then Ray and Alex with Pete still at the rear.

The 3rd lap had Brett maintaining his lead but Patto had gained a heap of ground by staying to the Alfred Cove side this time. Huddy was still right behind Patto having a great tussle downhill in the strengthening breeze. Gavin and Mick were having a great race in 4th, Byron and Coel were in 5th but decided to do a swan dive onto the top mark just to prove that a fast boat can have issues. Kenbar was next followed by Matt then Paul, Ray, Alex and Pete.

At the finish it was Brett then Patto, Huddy and Gavin in 4th.

Another great afternoon of Skate sailing on the Swan.

Heat 7 – Monday 08 January 2024

An early race start at 10am was postponed by nearly an hour due to lack of wind for the competitors to get to the course on Melville Water west.

The SW breeze arrived about 10am so the course boats headed out. The fleet had dropped to only 9 competitors due to Pete Fannon and Greg Patterson not sailing. It was slightly longer course to the previous race but only 10-12 knots with some 15 knot gusts at times. Course 1 was sailed which was only 2 laps then through the finish. I think this suited a lot of the crews who were suffering from bruised and battered bodies.

The first work had them tacking a bit more to find the lifts than previous races a swing here and there proving interesting racing.

At the top mark the 1st time it was Brett 984, Gavin 937, Steve 945, Matt 973, Paul 978, Byron 941, Ken 969, Alex 946 and Simmo 980.

The downhill run had quite a few more gybes thrown in to reach the bottom gate but a few good rides were had.

Similar tacking duels ensured Brett maintained his early lead and reached the top in the lead. Gavin appeared to have gained a bit of ground with Huddy in 3rd, Matt in 4th, Ken 5th, Byron 6th, Paul 7th, Alex 8th and Simmo in 9th.

A bit more gybing downhill but Brett remained in front at the finish followed by Gavin, Huddy, Ken, Byron, Paul, Alex, Simmo then Matt who unfortunately had thought there was another lap to do and hadn't seen the on station flag and hadn't gone through the line, he lost quite a few places in the process.



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Well that was the end of the series and I would like to thank all the Race Committee and PRO Helen Suriano for all her hard work, the volunteers who we all come to rely on for helping lay the course and rescue duties, the EFYC tower crew manning the control room, all of our sponsors who make the series possible with their generosity, and our spectators who have enjoyed seeing such highly skilled sailors in action.

Final results will be advised after presentation night this evening.

This is Allan Spencer signing off for this series. Best wishes to all and safe return for those from NSW.