

ARYA 2018 IOM National Championships in Hobart, Tasmania

A Kiwi Perspective from Paul Johnson, Christchurch Model Yacht Club

CONGRATULATIONS Risdon Brook Radio Yacht Club and Montrose Bay Yacht Club for a stellar event

The large team of volunteer members of Risdon Brook Radio Yacht Club and Montrose Bay Yacht Club, supported by their many sponsors, hosted a highly successful four-day ARYA 2018 IOM Championships.

Many months of planning were evident in the well organised races, shore time and facilities.

A warm Tassie welcome was extended to competitors and their friends, family or partners, including those of us who arrived a day or more early. Risdon and Montrose club members were on the lookout for IOM arrivals even though the A Class Champs were underway.

Fifty two competitors including Jerry Bower from the USA and seven Kiwis together with Aussie entries from every state brought a range of IOM designs together for the four days of intensive racing and wonderful camaraderie.

Montrose Bay Yacht Club's main clubroom allowed plenty of space for the check-in and registration which were made even more efficient using an online booking system. The room was well used for lunch each day and the welcome barbecue and final prize giving. Tea, coffee, water and snacks were on tap throughout the event with free fruit available. Secure storage was provided in the clubhouse and the boat storage area was excellent for out-of-wind maintenance and set up. A much needed hose was available to rinse the salt off our gear at the end of each day.

Weather-wise, we had everything; from a few races in A rig to three days switching between perfect B rig conditions to top B and the full range of C. Fortunately, there was very little rain. The Montrose Bay location provided a huge open run down the Derwent River for the north to north west winds. You could see gusts coming and prepare for them.

And, did they produce hairy downwind sailing! Often, ten or more boats could be seen ploughing their way down big waves, flitting left or right, as if the wind was grasping the sails and taking over the helm. I believe there were no high-speed collisions which is a testament to the helming skills and the elevated control area.

The race committee, ably lead by Principal Race Officer Jeff Byerley, was unphased by the wind strengths and regular shifts as well as a significant ebbtide current. Buoys were laid accurately on courses which made the most of these variables.

The start line was longer, to help minimise collisions in the strong conditions, and to help maximise the number of boats with a fair start. It was laid accurately to the average wind direction, and rarely adjusted, so helms could develop and improve starting strategies over a sequence of races using the shifts and other conditions as they came through.

Windward, separation and gate marks were also accurately laid to offer space for passing lanes upwind and downwind, on both sides of the course. This encouraged tactical decision making ahead of each leg, around the opponents, gusts, shifts, current and waves. Exciting changes in placings often resulted, right up to the finish line.

Occasionally a strand of sea grass stopped a boat in its tracks to offer yet another challenge trying to back off the weed and get going.

Race management was strong and achieved a fine balance between running as many races as possible and giving the race officials much needed breaks. Some competitors were asked to be observers and quickly discovered how taxing that was.

Time was carefully judged for competitors to move the significant distance between the control area and the setup / launch area. Risdon Brook and Montrose officials had done everything in their power to arrange efficient launch facilities and made the best of the pontoon which was put in place literally a week before the event. The race committee at the control area used radio communication with a team at the pontoon to keep us informed about race calls.

The standard of racing and rules observance was high across all three fleets. Consequently, protests were taken seriously by the race officer and a few significant hearings were held to determine placings for the following race.

From the start, Jeff the PRO stated that observers would only note a contact between boats, or boat and a mark if they were 100% sure. The observers informed the helms involved and we were taken off the lists as soon as we resolved the incident. But, if the incident was not resolved, both helms were disqualified.

We were regularly encouraged by the PRO to use the correct protocol of clearly repeating our own protests quoting only the sail numbers. Most did just that with a positive, non-personal tone and appropriate outcomes.

Occasionally the protocol was missed and some inappropriate swearing or grumpy grudge calling went on in quite heated situations.

However, negativity was relatively minimal because most helms were upbeat about the sailing and Robert Gavin's publicity lens and video by Mike Holbrook were omnipresent resulting in [loads of spectacular visuals](#).

The championship was in contention right up to the last day with five helms fighting it out for first place and another group of five or more vying for a place in top ten.

Congratulations go to Paul Jones who came out on top and generously acknowledged his competitors for their quality of racing. Scott Condie (2nd), Sean Wallis (3rd) and Ross Bennett (4th) were all equal on nett points after 19 qualifying races and had to use their totals for the final placings. Greg Torpy picked up fifth.

[The full results are on the championships' website.](#)

As always, the results do not show the human stories that made the event so successful. Every competitor has a story to tell from race incidents to maintenance to helping each other and more. None so dramatic as the sinking of Pete Sylvester's boat on Day One. The most likely reason is the impact of boat against wave popping the hatch. His four grandchildren kicked off Day Three watching their diving dad rise from the depths holding Pete's boat aloft and intact.

Kiwi Phil Pryde became known as Mr Winchman because No 23 chewed through the cogs of no less than four winches. Phil managed to rebuild each one and keep sailing while continuing to provide help for other sailors as he does with his infectious enthusiasm.

Every competitor felt acknowledged and valued through this national event. And no more so than in the prize giving wittily compered by Scott Condie. The many sponsors had gifted quality prizes for more than the podium placings. Two sportsmanship awards, a mid fleet prize and even a snorkel for Pete Sylvester, are examples.

I think I speak for everyone when I say "Thank You" to Risdon Brook and Montrose Bay for a wonderful Nationals. Also, you have forged a strong connection across the ditch for future competitions with an international twist.

Paul Johnson IOM NZL04