



## International A Class

### Regatta Report

A fleet of 13 International A Class yachts opened competition in the 2018 National Championships at Montrose Bay on the banks of the River Derwent, Hobart.

The fleet comprised three Swords, six Venoms, a couple of Sweet 9's, a Heat Haze and the new Blister. There was plenty of interest in the match up – how would the Tasmanian hot shots compare to interstate champions, and how would the Blister stack up against its older stable mate the Venom and the well regarded Sword?

Day one weather was a challenge for the PRO (Lindsay Walker) and his boat rescue crew. Plenty of course changing was necessary as the wind swung almost full circle during the day, starting out NW, then moving West and South West before dropping out and turning into a SE sea breeze.

Wind strength was a challenge for skippers, with races alternating between light air and 15 knots. The sea breeze was reliable but caused a sail change late in the day.

The strong contingent of Tasmanian skippers made the running at the start with Lisa Blackwood, John Cole-Cook and Michael Hickman all recording early success. However, as the races progressed Graeme Howie (WA) and Brian Dill (NSW) found their feet and started to read the conditions well, gaining some good wins after lunch.

The heavier breeze also appeared to favour the Sword design which punched through the short chop very effectively and was cleverly steered up by the interstate skippers into a stiff breeze to counteract tide currents.

Day two saw the River at her finest with a warm day, but unfortunately very little breeze. The PRO set a North – South course and the first race resulted in a drifter that Lisa Blackwood in particular managed to handle extremely effectively.

No further racing to be had until after an early lunch, when the sea breeze arrived. On the back of it we saw some of the most entertaining competition of

the series with several close races occurring back to back and winners changing regularly.

Weed developed as an issue, washed into the River on a rising tide from muddy banks upstream, and blown down onto the course on the sea breeze.

As the afternoon progressed the true class of Graeme Howie became apparent as he took a firm grip on the trophy leading into the third day of competition.

Competitors and spectators alike arrived at Montrose on day three expecting to see some exciting racing to close out the competition. Despite a Bureau of Metrology forecast of “potentially damaging strong winds”, the course at the start of the day was completely calm as organisers set up as usual.

However, just before the fleet took to the water, it took just five minutes for winds of about 50 knots to arrive, laying waste to the organisers tent as we beat a hasty retreat.

A couple of hours later the PRO assessed that conditions were OK for racing and called the fleet onto the water. Three races were held before the last was abandoned as another squall was seen approaching the course. The Bureau prediction of damaging winds was completely correct with at least three broken masts and lots of gear damage.

Graeme Howie continued to sail successfully throughout this heavy weather, and in fact finished with seven wins in the last ten races to take out the series with a convincing lead.

Final results:

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Graeme Howie, WA (57)      | 8 Ian Dickinson, Tas (174.3) |
| 2 Brian Dill, NSW (75)       | 9 Geoff Wiseman, Tas(183)    |
| 3 Lisa Blackwood, Tas (89)   | 10 Maurice Jones, Tas (219)  |
| 4 John Cole-Cook, Tas (95)   | 11 Ted Stevens, Tas (256)    |
| 5 Denton Roberts, WA (123)   | 12 Peter Darcey, Tas (301)   |
| 6 Peter Morris, Qld (124)    | 13 Andy Hamilton, Tas (326)  |
| 7 Michael Hickman, Tas (143) |                              |

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