

CELEBRATIONS AND A LOVELY SYDNEY DAY



Image thanks to SailMedia

A very pleasant summer morning greeted crews as they arrived at the Squaddie for a fun day of racing on the Harbour as part of the revived Sydney Harbour Marathon and the celebration by the A18s of their 90 year anniversary.

Our open boats were officially part of the day's activities, but due to longstanding safety reasons that have limited racing of open skiffs on the Harbour to the area south of the Sow and Pigs, we chose to conduct a couple of sprint races on a special course to be part of the action, but at all times in reach of a safe beach should it be needed. It wasn't!

Vice Commodore, Marshall Flanagan, took Australia across to Double Bay to demonstrate the complex process of rigging a traditional 18 footer. By all reports, the younger generation watched in awe and wonder as they counted the number of halyards, sheets and lines needed to go to sea. Not sure, but a few lessons in knot-tying were probably on offer as well. We intend some time in the future to get some of the younger brigade out on the open skiffs to finish their education and to show the thrills and skills of sailing our lovely skiffs.



Image thanks to SailMedia



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The Commodore, Terry Stewart, had set a triangular course for the sprints. Starting in the vicinity of Clark Island, around the northern YA mark at the head of Chowder Bay, around Shark Island and back to the start line to finish. It was hoped that the course would provide enough of an angle upwind, with a spinnaker run or two depending upon the breeze. Alas, the cycle of easterlies continued as it has this summer, so the races turned into a “soldiers’ course” with very few passing opportunities. But a warm 8-10 knot ESE breeze was some compensation, although lacking some of the usual thrills and spills.

The first race was a handicap start with all handicaps halved for the shorter course. This proved to be not quite enough for the conditions. Tangalooma (Neville Turbit) led all of the way for a close win over Mistake (Jerry Tickner). Alruth (Alan Robertson) finished only a minute or so behind the winner to take third place. Australia (Marshall Flanagan), after her PR duties at Double Bay, suffered a mishap on the launching ramp and was forced to trail the fleet after a late start. Yendys (Michael Van Stom) and Aberdare (Michael Carter) showed that even in a fun race, tactics at the start do matter.

The two scratch skiffs came together at the line and with Aberdare to windward and a little early, Yendys succeeded in pushing Aberdare up and over the line, Being OCS, Aberdare was forced to dip back and re-start, losing a minute in the process.

Images of the Start of Race 1 with thanks to SailMedia



As is the case with most sprint series, the start sequence for the second race next race starts with the signal for the last boat finishing the first race. To keep it interesting, the second race was a scratch start with all of the seven starters making a good start and a bit of a spectacle for the crowd on the ferries out to follow the Marathon. If you haven't seen it, Sail Media (led by our good mate, Jimmy Bury) had its drones up and took some great aerial footage as the boats powered away down the course. You can get a replay on YouTube for that and for the entire Harbour Marathon.



Images with thanks to SailMedia



Yendys led the fleet to Chowder Bay and rounded less than half a minute ahead of Top Weight. Australia had redeemed herself and set off for Shark Island only 16 seconds behind Top Weight. The entire fleet rounded with less than 2 minutes separating them. At Shark Island, it was still only 3 minutes between first and last.

This says something about the skiffs that should encourage the back markers. While it is true that races are usually won and lost on the upwind legs when course strategy and crew work pay big dividends with more passing opportunities, the truth is that boat speed is not all that different between the skiffs. And if more boats were able to carry the big gear that Yendys usually does in under 12 knots of breeze, then our races would be a lot closer.

But back to the race ... With its big red and white spinnaker up and doing the job, Yendys increased its lead to finish first, 3 minutes ahead of Top Weight which had done well to hold off Aberdare and finish second by 8 seconds from Aberdare in third place. Bigger spinnakers, set a little faster on the very square run to the finish would have seen the fleet closer together than the 6 minutes that was still a pretty good result overall.



Photo thanks to Bruce Kerridge who was out on the Killo

Applying the handicaps to the scratch race saw Mistake take out another first (handicappers take note even if this race does not count). Top Weight scored second place to round off a good day. And Tangalooma, too, had a great day to take third.

The evening concluded with a hardy band of sailors boarding the Killo for a trip across the Harbour to join in the celebrations at Double Bay and to catch up with 18 footer legends old and new. The Marathon, incidentally, was won by a Cherub and the smile on the young skipper's face when he was handed the \$2,000 cash prize was quite something! We need to find a way to be in the running for the prize when the Marathon is held again next year. The organisers are to be complemented on reviving this tradition that brings together off-the-beach boats and crews. That has got to be a good thing for sailing!

No sailing next week as we dust off the champagne flutes for another Sail GP event that excludes sailing from the east of the Harbour. We'll make sure that the Squaddie has it on the TV so that all sailors can still get their weekend fix at the Club. See you there!

SCROLL ON FOR MORE PHOTOS!!



Photos thanks to Bruce Kerridge who was out on the SFS Start Boat, The Killo





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