



SYDNEY FLYING SQUADRON LTD

Australia's oldest open boat sailing club
Founded in 1891

THE RINGTALE

HEAT 3 AUSTRALIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS: 31ST JANUARY 2026

YENDYS' CATASTROPHIC GEAR FAILURE PUTS ABERDARE IN THE BOX SEAT

A 15-18 knot nor-easter greeted the fleet as they lined up for the start of the third heat of the Australian Championships on Saturday. A humid smoke haze had settled in over the Harbour during the morning until a cool ENE breeze cleared it away and opened up the opportunity for the nor'easter to build. The NE No.1 course was again the venue for this heat. Although officially the third and final heat of the Championships, there is one more heat to go with the first heat, postponed with bad weather previously, being sailed next Saturday.

Eight skiffs competed with Aberdare (Michael "Flipper" Carter), Yendys (Bazza Watson) and Scot (Ryan Paget) getting away well from the middle of the line. Australia IV (Terry Stewart) lost some time when a jib block exploded, leaving the boat with emergency repairs that fortunately enabled them to recover and join the race.

The back end of the ebb tide dictated a traditional course to Bradleys Head to get the best of the compressed breeze on the point and the small lift with the tide. There was still plenty of east in the breeze, too, and the starboard tackers did well until the low tide meant a tack well short of the lighthouse to avoid the bricks.

Aberdare was sailing extremely well with a No.3 jib enabling her to point higher than Yendys that was labouring slightly in the gusts under her large main and a No.2 jib. As a result, Aberdare crossed in front of Yendys at Bradleys and headed out towards the channel mark (formerly the Kentucky mark) before tacking back on to starboard and choosing the often-preferred western shore for the beat up to the top mark.

Aberdare and Yendys were at this stage well in the lead and the boats to beat. Scot, too, had done well, although she probably tacked back a little too early thus missing out on the lifts closer in to the lighthouse, costing her some time. Yendys decided to head to the eastern shore in pursuit of smoother water (the tide was slack by then) and the promised easterly right handers. It was a decision that paid off for Yendys when, closing in on the Beasel Buoy, Yendys had made up ground on Aberdare and, with one less tack to get to the mark, managed to round just inside Aberdare and take the lead. Scot, with its improving trainees aboard did well to round third followed by Australia, A4 (who had recovered well from her misfortunes), Tangalooma and The Mistake.



Photos thanks to Race Officer, David 'Longy' Longworth on Rippleside

Yendys' smart set of her No.2 spinnaker widened the gap to Aberdare and, picking up some really good puffs past Steele Point (now mostly referred to by its other name of Shark Point), Yendys was on the plane and over a minute ahead of Aberdare as she closed in on the gybe mark. But then disaster struck when the aft, port turning block, or horn housing the brace, tore out of the deck with the resulting, freed-up loop of the brace pulling the skipper, Bazz, off his perch and skying the pole. In less than a second or two, Yendys had gone from race leader to a series-busting capsized.

Your scribe can assure you that it is a very unhappy sensation swimming in Sydney Harbour, with the chance at another Title having been literally sunk and watching the entire fleet sail past. All the more so when the increasingly well-sailed Aberdare, with a second place already in the series, looked set to add a first to her tally and be in the box seat for the Title.



Above – walking the plank on Tangles

These photos thanks to Barley Stewart

Below – SFS Legends: John Tierney, John 'Steamer' Stanley and Peter Notley



Shark Island claimed another casualty when Australia (Marshall Flanagan) succumbed on or after the gybe. They were left with a tow to the Edwards while Yendys' rescue proceeded to Milk Beach where some of Sydney's (truly) beautiful people enthusiastically lent a hand to de-rig and right the skiff for the tow home.

Meanwhile, Aberdare had done everything right and at the Shark Island mark, led A4 by over 4 minutes with Scot a minute behind in third place. They were followed by Tangalooma (Neville Turbitt) and The Mistake (Jerry Tickner).

From there, places hardly changed and after the run back to Shark Island, at the finish Aberdare was the victor, winning by 6 minutes from A4 with Scot taking a well-earned third place a minute or so only behind A4. Tangalooma and the Mistake completed the tally. But only just ...

Moments after crossing the line, The Mistake managed to add some interest to her day by joining the other two bull shark investigators. A tow to the “secret” beach under the Oxley’s castellated pile on Darling Point meant a late arrival back at the ramp.

On handicap, Scot scored a win by just under 2 minutes from Aberdare in second and by 8 minutes from A4. A brilliant result for this newbie crew and a great result for the Sailing Back in Time Program.

Many thanks to the volunteers (Barley, Stewart and their crews - and including The Admiral on the Wood Duck RIB) for their busy afternoon of rescues. Some days, it seems three RIBs are barely enough.

So, going into the final race for the Aussies next week, Aberdare looks to be in a great position to engrave Flipper’s name on the Galloping Ghost Trophy. She needs to finish no worse than two places behind A4 to claim the Title. A4 can win the Title if A4 can find a way to put three boats between her and Aberdare by the finish. It will be a thrill next week to see what tactics Flipper and Terry adopt for the challenge. For the rest of the fleet, there is always the remote hope that King Neptune will intervene and sink both Aberdare and A4 (at which point the mathematical permutations become interesting – but hardly worth considering for now).

As a final note, the SFS Board and the AOST Trustees now have another reminder that maintaining the fleet in top condition must be a priority. Gear failure ruins any competition as Yendys’ crew can attest. But it does cost real money. So it is the current policy of the Club to set up a “sinking” fund (a bit of a misnomer don’t you think?) for the majority of the fleet that is not privately owned. The Board is encouraged by the improvement in the financial position of the Club that is opening up the possibility of this important step being seriously implemented for the first time. Another reason to get involved in your Club! Make use of its facilities and look forward to the terrific changes in member amenities that are on the way while we ensure the longevity of our beautiful skiffs.

So, next week looks like a beauty. Not to be missed! Better get your body to the Squaddie!



The success of the Sail back in time program – Aberdare crew (1 trainee not pictured) and Scot (3rd fastest with several trainees on board. Photos thanks to SFS Life Member, Selwyn Black.

Final results (HANDICAP) can be found here: <https://app.sailsys.com.au/club/15/results/series/5054/races>

Championship result:

Results for Saturday 31 Jan 2026						
AUS Championship Heat 3						
Start	Course	Breeze	Strength	Tide		
Scratch	1	ENE	16-22 kt	Flood		
Skiff	Skipper	Handicap	Finish Time	Race Time	Corrected Time	Handicap result
Aberdare	Michael Carter	8	4:16:04 PM	1:42:04	1:34:04	2
Australia IV	Terry Stewart	8	4:22:03 PM	1:48:03	1:40:03	3
Scot	Ryan Paget	17	4:23:19 PM	1:49:19	1:32:19	1
Tangalooma	Neville Turbitt	14	4:29:06 PM	1:55:06	1:41:06	4
The Mistake	Jerry Tickner	16	4:35:22 PM	2:01:22	1:45:22	5
Australia	Marshall Flanagan	12	DNF			
Alruth	Scott Spackman	11	DNF			
Yendys	Bazza Watson	0	DNF			
Britannia			DNS			
Top Weight			DNS			
Myra Too			DNS			



These photos thanks to Bazza Watson (via FaceBook)



FERGY NAMING CEREMONY

Sydney put on perfect weather for the christening of Fergy before the race on Saturday.

SFS President, Rusty Debney spoke fondly of his mate Fergy, followed by Suzie Conway, Fergy's wife performing the christening rites.

It seemed fitting that Fergy was the rescue boat that towed Yendys (and Rusty) to shore later that day...



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