

3-7 News

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Rhys Johnston



National Champion 2008-09

Sailing "Blue Tack", No. 375

(Bay of Islands)

Rhys did the incredible: with a great late run in the contest, he overtook the seemingly unbeatable Derek Scott, who had been dominant until Race 5....

In those first 4 races Derek (defending champion) was pushed hard by Rhys, as well as Ben de Fluiter (3rd overall), and Lance O'Connell (4th, and 1st Veteran), but seemed to have a permanent winning touch, and looked to be safe for the series.

The light conditions (which marred the contest for us slightly-overweights) made some races very long, as the wind often faded soon after the start signal. Unpredictable swings in direction also played a big part: the 1st attempt at Race 3 was abandoned after a 90° windshift turned placings upside-down.

SKIPPER	SAIL No.	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Race 6	Race 7	Drop	Net Pts	PLACE
Rhys Johnston	375	4	3	1	2	1	1	1	-4	9	1
Derek Scott	372	1	1	3	1	5	7	3	-7	14	2
Ben de Fluiter	384	3	2	4	5	10	2	2	-10	18	3
Lance O'Connell	265	2	4	6	3	3	8	5	-8	23	4
Phil Ash	123	8	5	5	6	4	4	4	-8	28	5
Chris Mitchell	191	9	9	12	8	6	6	8	-12	46	6
John Elliott	308	10	19	2	9	11	5	10	-19	47	7
Malcolm Paine	382	7	8	7	7	12	10	9	-12	48	8
Brett Gray	328	6	19	10	4	2	9	19	-19	50	9
Kate de Lange	381	11	12	13	14	9	3	7	-14	55	10
Andrew Clarke	81	12	7	15	12	8	11	6	-15	56	11
Andrew Brown	192	5	19	9	10	7	19	19	-19	69	12
David Cook	216	14	10	8	15	15	12	13	-15	72	13
Stu McKinven	179	16	11	11	19	17	14	11	-19	80	14
Daniel Wise	203	15	14	17	13	13	13	12	-17	80	15
Demian Dixon	385	13	6	19	11	14	19	19	-19	82	16
Steve Ussher	380	17	13	14	16	16	16	14	-17	89	17
Michael Rivington	313	18	15	16	17	18	15	15	-18	96	18

On the last day the wind filled in more often, enabling Race Officer Tony Brown to hold 4 races. But it still faded at times, and swung up to 60° at others.

Rhys proved to be master in these conditions. He was to my mind the only one with boat speed equal to Derek's (others were only close to equal). In Race 5 Derek was covering Rhys, but Rhys managed to split, and jag a big wind shift. He won, with Derek unable to peg back 3 other beneficiaries of the wind shift.

The balance seemed to change at this point: Derek restarted one race, thinking he was OCS. Rhys got caught on the wrong side of a shift, but fought his way back to the front... Derek got caught by another, but did not have time to do the same. Suddenly, it was Rhys who had the unbeatable look.

These two are light-weather wizards. I am not sure which of them would win another light-weather contest, but I am sure they would both beat all of us again.

Congrats to Rhys! (Also for winning 'Can of the Contest', owing to risky angles adopted at times during downwind sailing – too much so at one point!)

Other Standouts:

Ben de Fluiter also showed excellent tactics and sailing skills. If he were not that bit taller and heavier than Rhys and Derek, I suspect he would have been right up there with them in the light conditions.

Lance O'Connell and **Brett Gray** both relish sailing in stronger conditions, and have bodyweight more suited for that. Yet both turned in some top performances. Brett spoilt his overall placing with TWO OCS's, but Lance never went lower than 8th in any race, and was a convincing winner of the Over-45 Veterans' Division.

Katie de Lange bought Alan Paine's boat about a month ago, having been Hamilton's best Starling skipper before that. Wanting time on the water, she sailed every race she could at Hamilton, only to find glassy calms, which were of little use....



Fast Learner: Just out of Starlings, Katie trapezed like this on her way to a 3rd placing in Race 6.

But racing at the Nationals proved more useful: during the last 3 races, Katie emerged from the back half of the fleet to join the top echelon. As well as effortlessly taking the Ladies' Prize, Katie surprised everyone by also taking the **Under-21 Championship** by one narrow point from -

Andrew Clarke, another promising young sailor from the Bay of Islands. Andrew bought John Candy's boat several months ago, and soon made me feel rather slow upwind! Despite not having owned his boat much longer than Katie, Andrew took a 6th, a 7th and an 8th placing. A great effort, and maybe a little bad luck in being so narrowly pipped at the post for the Under-21 Cup...

Phil Ash – 5th overall, runner-up in the Veterans' Division, Phil is improving all the time in No 123, a boat first made top-bracket by Nathan Handley. I used to think I was the fastest grey-haired sailor in the class, but not any more!

President Chris Mitchell !! Chris was out of circulation for most of the season, working to restore No. 191 to a sound and beautiful condition. He got back on the water less than a month before the Nationals, and quickly hit improved form with his new boat. Note that once his worst performance was dropped, Chris had no double-figure placing to count. With this consistency, the Class President was able to out-perform the richly talented but sadly erratic Class Secretary. (Grumble, grumble...)

Many Thanks

to Andy Greager and helpers at the Bay of Islands Yacht Club, and to Race Officer Tony Brown. A top light-weather Contest!

(John Elliott)