



NSW Formula Windsurfing Championship 2009

I have a constructive criticism for the powers at be – when running slalom make sure it's windy, for formula not so windy – not the other way around!!!

As usual, the promise of a formula only event brought the windiest weekend forecast for some time (and we have had some good ones), and it delivered more than forecasted.

It was also exciting times, as our own (as much as he is from Queensland and all), world conquering (well Greek conquering) pro Sean O'Brien AUS-120 was back.

When looking at the 5-30knot variable breeze he commented it was just like Europe, just without the need for a 6mm wetsuit.

We also welcomed a few more from Europe, notably – with Jesper Vesterstrom DEN-111, being too scared to face us – the Danish responsibilities fell to young Christen Justesen, and Sean opened up his quiver bag to find Julien Savina gasping for air, and boosting the French presence.

The first race (and attempt at race 2) was bordering between crap and fantastic with the wind flicking between 4-5knots and 10-12knots but we got around and at least we had a race. Sean got off to a brilliant start but despite the dire warnings, didn't sign on and was DSQ-ed (Welcome Back).

Apparently they don't do it in Europe! (But for some reason the actual Europeans had no problem being able to do it).

The second race could have a complete book written about it, like the 98 Hobart race (Ok...maybe not that bad), but a few paragraphs will have to do. Sail size decisions were split heading out with some of us procrastinating until the last moment to make the decision. Yours truly did this and went big thinking things were lightening off a bit, and hitting the water well within the 3min yellow and heading down to the start realising there was a bit on, trying to stop and instantly falling trying to stop. Fark! I got back up not too late for the start but things were not comfortable with cam's reluctant to rotate in what felt like 20+ knots.

Shortly after the start things moderated but the 'small' 9.8's had got away with the initial gusts – and for the mid-half of the race things weren't too bad except for the complete lull that left me stranded up the second work to be passed at whim. Roughly about the time the leaders were heading down the run and the second group were hitting the top mark the wind started to blow and things were getting hairy. 60sec later with the top 3 home, it really started to blow and I think my board suffered complete super capitation as the board, from almost a square run rounded up and the tail ploughed sideways sub-marine-ing .

The inevitable happened, and after popping my head up and looking around I couldn't see a single sail still upright and sat it out till it moderated to a mild gale. Up-hauling (water starting would have been possible if the board stopped flipping) I pulled off the broadest arc'd gybe of my life and headed for home, watching Fawksey AUS-21, really high, trying to run towards the buoy, with Ant AUS-808 lower and absolutely flying (which could only end in tears) and I wasn't far from Ricardo AUS-4 who looked like I felt.

Fawksey painfully got to the buoy, but instantly bought it. Ant went down – which would have been fun to watch if I wasn't in a world of pain, and Rick just disappeared.

Any speed created too much lift from the board/fin and keeping the board heading low towards the mark was difficult, but some tactical holding of the up-haul got me to the buoy, just as a resurrected Ant streaked past me within a few inches.

I crossed the line (just) tried to bear up to head home and, unintentionally, parked it too watch the fortunes of the rest. Muz AUS-720 made it home soon after with Rick not far behind – they too suffered my fate and joined me in the water, we had no idea of who was left on the course – thankfully most had head in well in time and very few people needed to be rescued – Fawksey made it back up and tacked his way through the finish line to be the last finisher in 8th. Eventually the wind back off, and the four of us got back up and sailed home joined by a few others from the top of the course. Morris AUS-8 asked us “what was all the fuss was about!”

No idea how windy it was – pretty confident to say it would have touched 40knots.

A lunch break was called to have a rest and let the wind moderate, and we got back out for another two races in a fantastic 20-25kn for which we were all more suitably rigged for.

Sat night saw a few hungry sailors hit the skiffies for dinner and post race survival stories.

Sunday dawned with as much wind as what we proved we couldn't sail in the day before – and at times it got windier during the day. Free sailing was about as good as it got with Byron clocking 36+ knots in rough water and the entire 98 Sailworks sailing team resurrecting themselves for a sail.

Eventually we conceded defeat and the presentation was called – Sam Parker was awarded the win on a count back from the Greek Champion – a fantastic result for Sam. Interestingly both looked serious and said nothing at the presso, looking like both were thinking ahead to the Nationals/Oceanics for Round 2. Ding Ding!!!

Tristan Perez continued his recent form to take FE+ from Mick Saunders and a fast finishing Baz Fawkes for a northern trifecta.

Massive thanks to the boys from Marmong Point Club for running the races. They did a tremendous job on a really difficult day.