

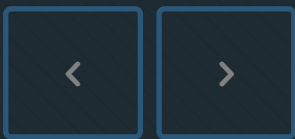
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HARDING TWINS GO 1,2 IN THE DARWIN

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MINNOW MIDWINTER NATIONALS

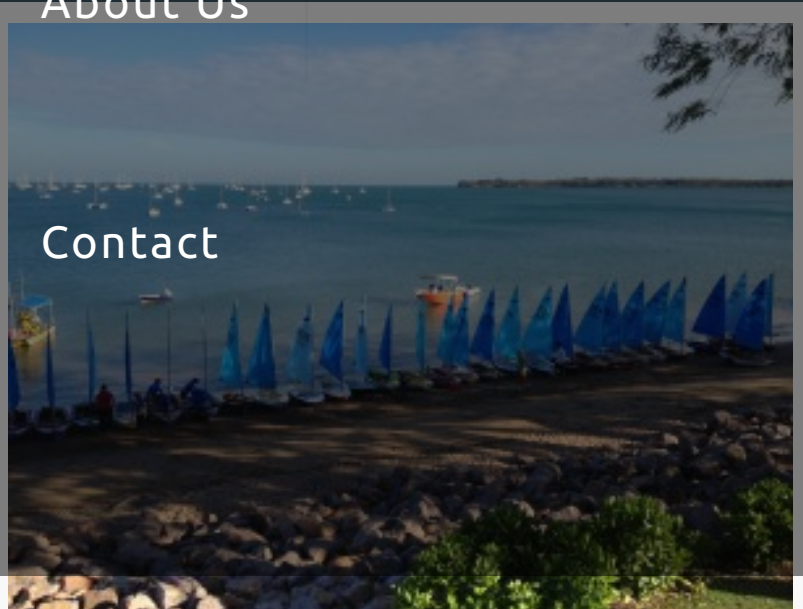


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Minnows at Darwin Sailing Club

The Darwin Minnow Nationals would have to rate as one of the highlights on the sailing calendar and simply has to be experienced to fully appreciate. The tropical climate, unique Top End surrounds and friendly laid back culture all make for the sense of being on an adventure in another country.

As for the sailing, conditions were perfect with 30 degree plus temperatures, 15-20 knot breezes for the first six races and 5-15knts for the remaining four. Initial concerns about crocs, stingers, sea snakes, sharks and anything else that considers Minnow kids as dinner were soon forgotten as the intensity of racing took over. Nevertheless, new speed records were set when it came to capsizing recovery.

In terms of results there was a total of 47 entries and the Vic squad had five boats in the top ten with places of 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th & 10th. Concerning equipment, the 1st, 2nd & 4th placed boats were all YMS hulls and used Quantum sails, the combination of

which seemed to translate into superior reaching speed.

The first six heats and invitation race were all sailed in 15-20 knots and were all won by Hayden Harding in dominant style with his twin sister and fellow Victorian Sailing Team member, Laura, finishing second in each. Hayden's aggressive, physical boat handling style and superior reaching / wave technique was a formidable combination in the fresh conditions and it appeared a series whitewash was in store.

But conditions can change and change they did. And so to did the results. Remarkably, Hayden's arch rival, Laura, staged a characteristic fightback winning the next two heats with Hayden finishing outside the podium places. After eight races with two to go, no one could threaten the twins for first and second but what order they would finish was still wide open. At the start of race 9, Hayden found himself buried mid-fleet and staring down the barrel however the wind faded forcing the committee to abandon the race. Like a true champion, Hayden managed to re-collect himself and held his nerve for the final two races in tricky, shifty conditions, doing enough to secure the series with sister Laura in second. Local Minnow star Keiran Schortz took 3rd place in the Open Division and another Darwin up and coming sailor Huw Wiltshire won the Junior Division.

Meanwhile, there was also a fierce battle going on for 4th, 5th & 6th place between Ethan O'Brien from Parkdale, James Hackett from Blairgowrie and WA sailor Cailin Winchcombe in his brand new all black boat, Barracuda. Going into the penultimate day, just two points separated the three boats. But overnight, in a cruel blow, Ethan got struck down by illness, conditions moderated

somewhat and James was able to exploit his significant weight advantage over the heavier Western Australian by notching up two 3rd's and a 4th to give him a strong grip on 4th place overall going into the final day.

There were many other individual highlights of note including Luke Telford's third place in race 5. Luke demonstrated the value of sailing the shifts by moving from outside the top ten into third place and then fought off quality opposition to stay there making it a 1,2,3 podium for BYS. A hard fought 7th place in the final race earned Luke a top ten result in the series.

Anna O'Brien from McCrae also announced her arrival on the Minnow scene with steady improvement and an impressive four top ten places in the last five races. Expect to see more from her.

. Keiren sailed a smart regatta and extremely consistently to finish a clear 3rd. Huw, at just 28kg, had a great battle with his older brother in the Juniors and showed the open fleet sailors how its done with a 4th, 2nd and 1st in the last three races, unlucky not to win two races after tangling with weed. No doubt he will be a force to be reckoned with in the future.

In the Novice division, congratulations to Emma Bayliss and Kate Evans from Blairgowrie for their first and third places respectively. Importantly however, a big well done to all the novices for getting out there and having a go. There was lots of encouragement amongst the kids which was fantastic to see. We all look forward to their progress into the Open division at sometime in the future. Also well done to Sally Danks, winner of the inaugural 'Boat Builders Trophy' for her efforts in putting two holes in her boat and keeping Dad entertained while the rest of us drank beer, lets hope she can go back to back and retain the trophy next year.

The Victorian Minnows will now have a couple of months off to freshen up before the Minnow Development Squad program kicks off in September. This association coaching program aligns with all the major YV calendar events and prepares the kids for the January Nationals at Blairgowrie in what promises to be a huge regatta.

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