



## **Club Captain's Report**

### **Sailing Season 2020-2021**

#### Quick Facts:

- McCrae Catamaran Championships – Postponed 12 months due to COVID
- McCrae Laser Iso Regatta – 47 entries
- Ronstan Australia Day Regatta – 155 entries
- Sabre Victorian State Championships – 62 entries
- Tasar Victorian State Championships – 30 entries

The 2020-21 sailing season suffered a very slow start due to lingering effects of the COVID lockdown. The early weekends in the season were a test of flexibility and rapid adjustment to constantly changing restrictions requiring some inventive ways of managing races. COVID-related restrictions unfortunately resulted in the cancellation of the Opening Day.

The slow start unfortunately led to a lacklustre domestic season which saw the club only run fifteen Aggregate and Skipper of Skippers heats over nine race days. The average number of boats was also down on previous years. To provide greater flexibility in the uncertain times, the Sailing Instructions were amended to include several different courses – namely Alpha, Bravo and Charlie. These courses enable the Sailing Committee to run club racing with varying numbers of support boats. Bravo Course can be used when there are insufficient volunteers to staff both hard-chine boats, or the second hard chine needs to be used for a regatta.

The domestic season was countered to some extent by a magnificent series of well-attended regattas.

The Laser Iso Regatta was organised with the support of the Victorian Laser Association, although was not an official Laser event, due to the postponement of the National Championships. This four-day event coupled with two days of coaching was held in sublime conditions and greatly enjoyed by all. It was wonderful to see some of our young McCrae sailors getting out and competing in their first Laser regatta.

The Ronstan Australia Day Regatta was a blockbuster event this year, and a testament to the ability of McCrae to draw sailors from all over the country. We were forced to cap the entries at 155 to ensure we complied with the COVID restrictions which were in place at the time. While there were some challenges with the weather for the race management team, the atmosphere was excellent and when the wind did come so was the sailing. A special note of thanks is required for the tireless work of Steve Brayshaw on behalf of Ronstan for making this event happen.

Due to an additional lock-down announced with very short notice, we were forced to postpone the Sabre Victorian State Championships from its intended date. Fortunately, the Tasar Association was willing to share the club facilities during their scheduled championships, enabling us to run the two events concurrently. Due in no small part to the ability of our volunteers as well as the generous assistance of Mt Martha Yacht Club, we were able to run these events on separate courses without a hitch.

Our on-water infrastructure strengthened this year with the purchase of a new Bar Crusher, aptly named *Freedom* as it arrived shortly after we got out of lockdown. We were able to purchase this craft to replace *Georgiana* thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor in whose debt we remain. This new boat was the envy of many when we took it to Sail Bellarine to provide support to the Indented Head Yacht Club with their new regatta! We also purchased a new tractor for the start of the season, turning over the previous one before the salt water took control. This new vehicle has been running well all season long.

Our race management gear has been enhanced this season thanks to the addition of a TackTick anemometer to *McLure*, this provides for greater flexibility in laying courses and running multiple courses. An automatic starter has also been purchased for *Investigator* to ease the burden during rolling starts and ensure greater accuracy. We also purchased three larger inflatable marks thanks to the generosity of Scott Munro, these will make more regular appearances on the club course next season.

I am pleased to report that the rescue boat fleet has sustained ZERO hull maintenance costs for the season, much to the delight of our Bosun, Cameron Dunwoody. This is attributable to the enforcement of boat retrieval protocols and the superior "Transtyle" trailers which were purchased for *Bunurong* and *Jubilee*. Although a heavy aluminium trailer, it has suffered no corrosion as galvanised steel does and has proved a dream to load and unload. Consequently, the Sailing Committee has undertaken to mate *McLure* with a Transstyle trailer due to provide consistent equipment and do away with its current inferior trailer which has a limited remaining life.

For a Sailing Committee, running major regattas relies on a great many volunteers. Particular thanks go to Peter Merritt (PRO – Laser Iso), Colin Dods (PRO – Ronstan Australia Day Regatta, CRO – Tasar States) and Bronwyn Evans (CRO – Ronstan Australia Day Regatta) as well as Regatta Managers Scott Watson, Mark O'Brien and Graham Riley. Naturally, the race-related volunteers who have loyally served on patrol boats and in the tower throughout the season, although too numerous to mention here, have the Sailing Committee's humble thanks, as always. A special mention to Peter Merritt and Colin Dods who volunteered their time as PRO and CRO respectively at Sail Bellarine, McCrae YC received rave reviews thanks to their efforts.

As far as regattas for next season are concerned, the Cat Champs and Ronstan Australia Day Regatta will return however at this time we do not have any States or Nationals in place. At this time, we anticipate we are unlikely to host a Nationals in the New Year period as most were postponed twelve months from last year, however we are pursuing several possibilities for States. Looking further ahead, we are the preferred location for the Sabre National Championships in 2023-24.

The Sailing Committee sees the departure of Bronwyn Evans and Lachlan Cameron to the General Committee, we thank them for their tireless efforts this season and look forward to working with them in their new roles. Also leaving the group are Brody Riley and Louis Chapman both of whom have been excellent contributors to the committee over the last two seasons.

The good news for the Sailing Committee is that a new face as well as several familiar ones have nominated for next season in addition to the current crew.

On behalf of the Sailing Committee, I would like to acknowledge and thank the General Committee. This has been a trying season on many fronts, but Commodore Jon Knorr and his team have risen to the challenge and kept the place running.

I must take this opportunity to thank this season's Sailing Committee for their support amidst these trying times, without their help it would not have been possible to achieve any of the aforementioned items. After eight revisions to the Sailing Instructions, and three significant re-cuts of the program we eventually made it to the end of the season.

Last, but by no means least, a massive thank you to our volunteers. They turn up ready to go whether it is 10 degrees blowing 28 knots or 40 degrees blowing 2. They are the life blood of the club, and without them we would not be able to do any of this. We are incredibly lucky to have such a dedicated group – it is humbling to work with such wonderful people, and I cannot thank them enough.

Stay warm. Fingers crossed for a smoother off-season.

Alistair Watson  
Club Captain