



Club Captain's Report

Sailing Season 2021-2022

Quick Facts:

Victorian Catamaran Championships – 57 Entrants

New Year's Regatta – 62 Entrants

Ronstan Australia Day Regatta – 117 Entrants

The Sailing Committee's intention for this season was to provide as many opportunities for sailing as possible. This included Green Fleet racing for the juniors and mid-week Twilight Racing during the summer months. This was coupled with a commitment to hold racing if there were sailors present who wished to complete, so long as it was safe. However, in what felt like déjà vu, the start of the 2021-22 Sailing Season was interrupted by COVID lockdowns. Our planned pre-season Race Management and Rescue training along with all sailing in October were cancelled.

Our domestic season was once again significantly impacted by the weather. Numerous races were cancelled due to too much wind, or the absence of it. This limited the Aggregate series to fifteen heats over eight sailing days. The La Niña weather pattern resulted in Easterlies being far more prevalent in this season than years past, but this did give us the opportunity to hold races in areas which would not be considered normal for McCrae. The Sailing Instructions again included several different courses (Alpha, Bravo and Charlie) enabling the Race Officer to select an appropriately course size based on the number of competitors and available resources.

To make up for the late start to the season and the cancellation of numerous National Championships, the Sailing Committee organised the New Year's Regatta. A four-day event which was free for members, and even attracted competitors from other clubs. We tried a different format for this regatta, with racing starting in the morning and changing Race Officers each day. The regatta had a great atmosphere and brought some life into the club during a period which would otherwise have been quiet.

This season saw the return of the Victorian Catamaran Championships after it's postponement for twelve months last season. Thanks to a concerted effort by the Marketing and Comms Committee, we were able to build the fleet size when compared to the last edition, but there is more improvement required to get this event back to what it used to be. The weekend saw some of the toughest conditions during a regatta in many years and was a test for sailors and rescue crews alike. It was a thrill to see one of our members lift the overall trophy.

The Ronstan Australia Day Regatta returned with a three-day edition this year. The numbers were down slightly on last year due to uncertainty with inter-state travel, but it remains a fantastic event and will be back next year. The weather conditions tested the fleet and rescue boats once again, particularly on the first day. Fortunately, there were no long-term consequences. We need to thank Steve Brayshaw for his continuing efforts to bring this regatta to life and look forward to working with Ronstan next season.

Both the Catamaran Championships and Ronstan Regatta were held in much heavier conditions than we have seen at regattas for many years. There were several incidents in these regattas involving rescues where life safety had to be prioritised over property, and some procedures did not work as well as they should have. The Race Committee undertook a detailed review of all incidents across both regattas, and the Sailing Committee is already acting on the recommendations provided. These include:

- All regular patrol boat crews to attend AS Powerboat Handling Course (to be held at McCYC), as well as Sailing Committee and regular patrol boat users
- All regular patrol boat skippers to attend Safety Powerboat Operator Course
- Specific training for righting capsized boats
- Righting ropes to be mandated on Catamarans, and included as part of Compliance Check
- Communication procedures to be refined

It was also observed that in heavier conditions, the 4.2m RHIBS struggle to make way and are incapable of towing boats. They are also not a pleasant place to be on windy days. It is the Sailing Committee's recommendation that the two small RHIBS are sold when appropriate and a larger (5.5m) RHIB purchased as replacement. Given the larger regattas we are hosting, coupled with the increasing speed of high-performance yachts, it is the opinion of the Sailing Committee that a larger and more powerful boat is necessary to enable safe operations in heavy conditions.

The Sailing Committee did not make any significant purchases this season. Most of the expenditure was because of general maintenance or repairing damaged equipment. In good news, there was no hull damage reported all season.

McCrae's Race Management expertise continues to be in demand around the state. Peter Merritt (Australian Laser Masters PRO, Victorian Youth Championships PRO, Sail Bellarine CRO), Colin Dods (Australian Laser Masers CRO, Sail Bellarine PRO), Alistair Watson (Sail Bellarine CRO) and Bronwyn Evans all volunteered their time at other clubs. Colin (now an accredited National Race Officer) also ran a Race Management Training session which was attended by members from McCrae YC, Mount Martha YC and Indented Head YC.

The Victorian Catamaran Championships and Ronstan Australia Day Regatta will be back season, and we have secured the 2023 Taipan Nationals and 2024 Sabre Nationals.

I thank the Sailing Committee for their support this season. There is a lot of work which occurs in the background for sailing to happen and without their efforts it none of it would be possible.

Finally, a big thank you to our volunteers, both on- and off-water. Whether it is results, catering, yard maintenance, driving rescue boats or tractors, the club cannot operate without you. I encourage all members to look for opportunities to give back to the club, as it is only due to the generosity of the volunteers that we sail each weekend.

Alistair Watson
Club Captain