



NB SailSports Winter Sprint Series



Race Report by Sean Atherton

Thanks to WSC for running the first of the NB SailSports Winter Sprint Series rounds. The races went off smoothly but with a little hint of chaos in that all three Laser divisions (4.7, Radial and Standard) started together with a few sailors seen asking others, “are you starting with us? Is this just a full rig start or for us too?” Those that had neglected to read the SI's, with your correspondent being guilty, along with quite a few others, had a welcome general recall on the first start of the day to quickly confirm the mixed fleet start. The races were 2 lap windward leewards finishing downwind, the start line was nice and long and the beats were a decent length maybe around 1.2-1.4km.

The wind was enough for full hiking much of the time interspersed with the normal variability you often get in a westerly up in Rose Bay i.e 5knots to high teens on the same leg of the course. Adjusting quickly to the changes in pressure coming down the course was the order of the day to maintain that high average speed and punch through the short chop you sometimes encountered upwind.

The first race saw the breeze favour the left hand shore, with those boats that got across to the progressive left hander first, sailing the shortest course to the top mark. There were enough gusts coming down the course on the downwinds to give a few people a quick and no doubt refreshing swim in the harbour with even the boats near the front looking for stability at times rather than power.

The second race the breeze was sitting in the middle or even a little right which led to a fair few boats up at the committee boat end. With about 90 seconds to the start gun, it started to shift back around to the left. A few boats had a quick change of strategy and started to move down to the pin end and they quickly punched out to the left. Those that tacked under the port layline, with a few hundred meters to go to the top mark, were surprised to see that those boats that had overlaid slightly sailed in to the mark in strong left hand pressure almost tight reaching. The more conservative approach up the centre of the course gave little advantage this race. Those out on the right

looked good early but they faced a long haul on starboard tack to get back across the course with a portion of that course to be sailed in a header created by wind bending around Shark Island . The downwinds were a matter of looking for pressure and hopefully linking up with a fresh gust as your old one died away. Further back those that maintained clean air and stayed away from large packs of boats made some good gains in this race as the breeze was unsettled and variable between 5 and 15 knots much of the race.

The third race saw those that preferred the scenery out on the right hand side rewarded at last for their persistence with a big early right hand shift soon after the start. For those out on the left it looked to be game over with their only hope being that as the right hand group came abreast of Shark Island they would face the left hander that still dominated the top part of the course which is what eventuated. A few of the sailors on the left managed to put a few quick tacks in that saw them slowly make their way upwind through the ever changing breeze to round even with the right hand group. The breeze stayed quite variable for the last race with the wind lightening progressively the further you sailed downwind to the leeward mark. The last upwind of the day was best managed by getting out of that zone of light wind as quickly as possible by striking out right into the stronger breeze further up the course and then transitioning back across to the left when you got into that better pressure.

The races were a good length and the turn around on the starts was quick which made for an enjoyable day. One benefit of having just the one start at least. Hopefully the 4.7 sailors enjoyed starting with the 2 other divisions and I am sure having seen how quick some of them can go that they were able to hold their lane off the start and still had a decent race without being bounced around the whole day by other boats. The showers were a most welcome sight to those who had to sail back to their home clubs, much as they no doubt were to those that rigged at WSC.

MHASC looks forward to welcoming you to their club on the 4th of August for the second round of the NB Sailsports Winter Sprint Series. I hope you can join us.