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Big day at the 2011 Etchells NSW State Championships.



Sunshine, strong, predominantly Nor'easterly breezes and a good swell greeted the 35-boat fleet in the Thrifty 2011 Etchells NSW State Championships on Friday. Little wonder then that, Paul Gleeson, Rear Commodore of the host venue, Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club, commented that it was, 'A big day at the office!'

Indeed the Race Committee also had a lot on as they got the first three races of the series packed in to the afternoon's on-water affairs. 'Today was a tough day and that breeze certainly came in. A vessel was despatched ashore to get a larger anchor and more chain to stop our boat from sliding across the bottom of the course', said Kevin Wilson, who is part of the official team running the event.

The 1.2nm course stretched from just offshore of Merewether to adjacent to Nobbys Beach and had a lot of sailors really working hard in the up to 2m swell lines that ran through. Afterwards, a lot commented on how exhausted they were, which is completely understandable, really. Making the journey up from Melbourne for the event, Fleet Captain Jake Gunther said, 'Typical seabreeze stuff and a great warm-up for Sydney (Worlds), next year. We blew our boom up on the first work of the first race, which thankfully did not affect our speed.' Jake, along with crew Stuart Skeggs and Tony McPhail aboard, The Boat, went on to win that race. After the first day, they sit in fifth place.

Two other Victorian crews have also come up to join The Boat. Also from Brighton there is Jake's brother, Steve with Dawn Raid, currently in third and Noel 'Nitro' Drennan from Blairgowrie Yacht Squadron on the Mornington Peninsula. They are in eighth place. Also making the journey to the titles from further afield are Concubine from Adelaide, This will make her S from Brisbane and Addiction from New Zealand.

Leading after Day One is local lake Macquarie sailor, Kane Sinclair and the crew of Todd Wyborn and Grahame Prosser aboard Why Be Flat. They were very consistent with a third, fourth and second. Sydney's David Clark, with crew of Andrew Smith and Alan Smith on Fifteen have taken out second place, just one point astern of Sinclair. Third to sixth and seventh to twelfth also tightly placed.

Interesting weather patterns, so much a feature of the country of recent times, seem set to play a role as well, with a mild Southerly expected today and a stronger cousin due on the final day, Sunday.



Story and Images by John Curnow