

B14 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
WOOLLAHRA SAILING CLUB, SYDNEY
By former World Champion Tim Fells

The B14 World Championships has a history of close finishes but none has been as tight or dramatic as that served up at Woollahra SC in January. Going into the event the hot favourites were Matt Searle and Andy Ramus from Hayling Island, UK. Already with the European and UK National titles tucked away in the trophy cabinet, they continued with a dominant display in the pre-Worlds / Australian titles, winning with a race to spare.

No-one was putting their money elsewhere after the first day of the World's. In strangely un-Sydney like weather, Matt and Andy found their way through a very difficult, light and shifty Easterly to post a 1,6 placing them just behind Nils Jolliffe and Jon Branch (GBR) with 4 and 1. Back on the beach and two of the leading title contenders, Jono Pank / Rich Edwards (GBR) and Kieran Livermore / Tim Austin (AUS), were glumly looking at the OCSs against their names in race one. By contrast Richie Reynolds / Lissa McMillan (AUS) had returned in race one and sailed through the fleet to take a superb second.

Day two dawned with an expectation that it was going to do what it said in the brochure. A 'black nor-easter' sea breeze was forecast under clear blue sky. Out on the water it soon became apparent that these conditions favoured the leading Aussies. With their uppers flapping in the breeze and mains blading out like windsurfers, they smoked around the harbour, lower and faster than the Brits. Kings of the day were Kieran Livermore and Tim Austin, who posted a 2,1 to move right up the leader board closely followed by fellow Woollahrans, Scott and Cameron Kennedy. However, Matt Searle and Andy Ramus used every bit of their boat handling and experience to keep it tight and move to the top of the leader board with a 1,3.

Fired up by one of the best days sailing, the fleet threw themselves into the Tasmanian fleet 'Simply Red' wine party with renewed commitment. The indoor cycling assault course proved a new innovation and the boat race produced a disputed dead heat but when the Brits played their joker with the wobbly pole race, the Aussies were down and out off the water!

Day three was very hot, very sunny and extremely windy. After much deliberation the flags came down and the fleet launched into 25 knots that rapidly pushed past 30 on the downhill ride to the start. Few will have gone faster and with adrenalin pumping and eyes on stalks we prepared for a race to remember. Unfortunately, as the first rig came down, the RO called it a day and sent the fleet back to bar.

Two days to go and six races to sail saw the fleet out on the track early. After the excitement of the previous day a state of calm descended on Sydney and 3

aces were completed with crews rarely leaving the foredeck. It was difficult head boiling stuff, a day on which the Aussie challenge faltered and the battle for the title closed right up. With consistency hard to find, Jamie Mears and Matt Gill's (GBR) 5,1,2 was the pick of the day lifting them to third. Old hand and defending champion Tim Fells and crew Sean Dwyer (GBR) finally got their radar working to get a 1,4,4 and pull them up into the fight at the top. Meanwhile, Matt Searle/ Andy Ramus' 8,2,6 brought them back towards the chasing pack. With a 3 point margin over Nils Jolliffe/ Jon Branch and five points covering the first four boats it was still all to play for going into the final day.

It is never easy to win a World Championship and the closer you get to the finish line the harder it can become and so it proved for Matt and Andy. The weather gods seemed determined to make it as hard as possible with a return to the patchy, unpredictable Easterly with huge gains and losses to be made. Added to this it was Friday the 13th – unlucky for some!

Nerves were jangling for the first start that produced a general recall. The fleet was away second time under an "1" flag and it was Nils / JB who took the first race win, putting three points on Tim / Sean and 5 on Matt / Andy back in 6th. However, there was talk of a leading boat being OCS and a potential protest against Matt / Andy for a start line incident.

What was to be the final race started with Chris Bines and Dave Gibbons (GBR) taking the lead. With a collection of top 3 results they were the dark horses making a run for the podium. Heading into the last fateful run Jamie / Matt were up to 3rd with Tim / Sean 4th, unaware that they were leading the championships. Nils / JB and Matt / Andy were locked in battle for 9th and 10th believing they were the only two boats in the running. With Tim and Sean dropping to 7th in the last yards and Nils / JB maintaining their lead over Matt and Andy, the fleet went ashore believing the title had gone to Nils and JB.

Back at the club all was astir. The final results showed that it was Nils and JB who were OCS, losing their first place in race 8 and dropping them to 5th overall. At the same time Matt and Andy were losing their protest for the start line incident. Calculators came out. Who was the 2006 Champion? In the tightest finish ever, with just one point covering the top three places, Matt Searle and Andy Ramus had just done enough to win their first World Championship. All their commitment and preparation had paid off and they could head off on the harbour cruise prize-giving knowing they had achieved their dream!

This was a stunning championship for the class, socially one of the best and competitively the closest on record. The nine race series produced eight different race winners and there is no doubt that the new carbon mast has evened the playing field both between the UK and AUS fleets and also across the crew weight range. The next B14 Worlds will be held in the UK in July 2007 and will no doubt be just as close, action packed and fun.

OVERALL RESULTS:

- 1st GBR773, 'Gutted Hedgehog', Matt Searle & Andy Ramus (27 pts)
- 2nd GBR772, 'PICA', Jamie Mears & Matt Gill (28 pts)
- 3rd GBR758, 'AT&T', Tim Fells & Sean Dwyer (28 pts)
- 4th GBR741, 'CSC', Chris Bines & Dave Gibbons (30 pts)
- 5th GBR764, 'Boatracr.co.uk', Nils Jolliffe & Jon Branch (32 pts)
- 6th GBR768, 'Readycrest', Mark Barnes & Tom Pygall (43 pts)
- 7th AUS368, 'The Nude', Richie Reynolds & Lissa McMillan (49 pts)
- 8th GBR771, 'Ronstan', Jono Pank & Richard Edwards (64pts)
- 9th AUS373, 'Nerdwork', Marty Johnson & Mike Halkes (68pts)
- 10th AUS370, 'The Plumbers', Peter Ray & Gareth Wells (71pts)

Day 1 Monday January 9, 2006

Light ESE'ly conditions (5-10 knots) and blue skies greeted the fleet for the start of the B14 World Championships on Sydney Harbour. With a slight starboard bias on the line a large bunch of boats grouped at the committee boat. The first start was General Recalled. At the second start, several of the front runners were deemed to be OCS. The Nude (Richie Reynolds/Lissa McMillan) and Readycrest (Mark Barnes/Tom Pygall) were the only ones to return. By the first windward mark Gutted Hedgehog (Matt Searle/Andy Ramus) established a good lead followed by a pack of boats closely bunched. On the run snakes and ladders came to play with the left hand side being favoured seeing the Nude shoot up to second. At the second top mark Gutted Hedgehog, The Nude and Bang Bang (Kieran Livermore/Tim Austin) had established a gap to fight out the podiums. By the third work the breeze had lightened off and become very shifty. CSC (Chris Bines/Dave Gibbons) used the conditions to move through the fleet whilst Bondi Tram (Nathan Mills/Jay Nibbs) maintained their position in the top 5. Gutted hedgehog and The Nude fought it out down the last run with Searle and Ramus holding on to get the gun. CSC finished in third. Bang Bang was not far behind but was OCS along with two other boats.

Race two and the heat was on. The wind was lighter 5 - 8 knots from the SE and the temperature up. At the start the line was square with the boats on the bottom half getting the benefit of the starboard knock on the way across the bay. At the windward mark it was Boatracr.co.uk (Nils Jolliffe/Jonathon Branch) followed by Dump (Mark Watts/Karen Wiseman), Readycrest and Gutted Hedgehog. With second to fourth closely bunched Boatracr.co.uk pulled away to a comfortable lead while the other three had a real dogfight for the next three rounds to the finish. Boatracr.co.uk did an excellent job and horizon jobbed the fleet. Coming into the finish three boat lengths separated Dump and Gutted Hedge at the committee boat end and Readycrest in the middle. However, coming into the finish, the pack closed on the front runners on the front of a 15 knot breeze. The big gainers were AT&T (Tim Fells/Sean Dwyer) and CST (Clive Watts/Chris

Dixon) led the charge. Readycrest gybed on the line to pip AT&T by inches and CST a boat length behind with Dump fourth and Gutted Hedgehog fifth.

Day 2 Tuesday January 10, 2006

Day two of the CST Composites B14 World Championships on Sydney Harbour and the first race (Race 3) of the day was sailed in 18-22 Knots NE breeze accompanied by blue skies and a viscous chop. The fleet got away first time with the left side of the first beat paying with Gutted Hedgehog (Matt Searle/Andy Ramus) PICA (Jamie Meers/Matt Gill) ringing the bell in the left corner, rounding the windward mark first & second respectively. The chasing pack played the right with lifts coming from Shark Island, 3rd to 5th rounded the windward mark soon after. Downhill the fleet split left and right in search of bigger gusts with Bang Bang (Kierna Livermore/Tim Austin) making good gains to round second to Gutted Hedgehog. The leaders consolidated their positions on the second lap. On the final third lap Gutted Hedgehog placed a close cover on Bang Bang to take the bullet. Meanwhile Nerdwork (Marty Johnson / Mike Halkes) stormed passed Pica downwind to take third, Boatracer.co.uk (Nils Jolliffe/Jonathan Branch) made a late surge for fifth.

Race 4 and the breeze had increased by a couple of knots with a slight shift left. First out of the blocks was Bang Bang who sailed an impressive first beat to lead at the top mark, they were never challenged again in the race. Meanwhile the rest of fleet worked the right-hand side of the beat with Pica rounding second followed by Minibus (Don & Kate Forster) and Gutted Hedgehog. Minibus tested their rudder pintle to destruction on the bear way and some how saved a spectacular capsize, but their race was over. By the bottom mark Octopussy (Scott & Cameron Kennedy) and Nerdwork joined the chasing pack. Over the remaining two laps the Aussies handed out some downhill sailing lessons to get ahead of the Brits. Octopussy won the battle for second over Gutted Hedgehog, followed by Nerdwork and Pica.

Day 3 Wednesday January 11, 2006

Racing was cancelled for today as when on the water boats were experiencing gusts up to 30 - 35 knots. Three races Thursday starting at 1300 hrs and three races again on Friday.

Day 4 Thursday January 12, 2006

After the excitement of day 2 and 3 when strong winds challenged the fitness and boat handling of the B14 World Championship fleet, day 4 served up a totally different challenge. 3 races were sailed in a South-Easterly breeze which rarely crept above 8 knots and which had crews on the foredeck for most of the day. It was a day when the Aussie challenge faltered and saw four Pommie teams battling for the title going into the last day. Due to the wonders of carbon fibre,

both PICA and Boatracer were back on the water after breaking masts in the strong winds of the preceding days.

Race 5 started with AT&T (Tim Fells/Sean Dwyer) winning the pin end and crossing the fleet to take advantage of the tidal back eddie near Shark Island. CSC (Chris Bines/Dave Gibbons) also cleared the fleet and by pushing further into the right hand corner took the lead at the first mark. AT&T fought back to gain the inside berth at the leeward mark and covered CSC for the remaining lap to take the gun from CSC, Boatracer (Nils Jolliffe/Jon Branch), Readycrest (Mark Barnes/Tom Pygall) and PICA (Jamie Mears/Matt Gill).

With the wind moving to the East, Race 6 started with a beat through the channel between Shark Island and Rose Bay. Those who pushed out left gained a tidal advantage and Gutted Hedgehog (Matt Searle/Andy Ramus) recovered from a poor start to sail a magical beat to round first. The run was very difficult and AT&T came through to follow Gutted Hedge round the left mark. However PICA and CSC took the starboard mark and gained immediate tidal leverage to challenge for the lead. By the top mark PICA had taken the lead and survived a complex run to take the gun from Gutted Hedge, CSC and AT&T. Ritchie Reynolds and Lissa McMillan in The Nude led the Aussie challenge in fifth.

In race 7 Ronstan (Jono Pank/Richard Edwards), who had been notably absent from the front of the fleet, won the pin end and sailed into a big port hander to take an early lead at the top mark. PICA came through to take second with AT&T reading the run impressively to jump to third. With the breeze holding left the next beat was one sided and positions remained the same until the final run. Ronstan took the bullet from PICA with Boatracer narrowly pipping AT&T with Gutted Hedge in fifth.

With two discards in play the title looks like being between the leading 4 British teams, particularly with more light and variable winds forecast. Three races are scheduled for Friday and it looks like going down to the wire

Day 5 Friday January 13, 2006

Light to moderate SE breeze (8-12 knots) with grey skies and intermittent rain. Race 8 with a pin bias in Taylor Bay, saw the fleet split left and right off the line at the second attempt after a general recall. At the windward mark the leaders had played the right centre of the beat and were AT&T (Tim Fells/Sean Dwyer), CSC (Chris Bines/Dave Gibbons), Gutted Hedgehog (Matt Searle/Andy Ramus), and Ronstan (Jono Pank/Richard Edwards). On the run back to the leeward gate it was all about staying in the pressure with the leaders coming out of the left hand side and Readycrest (Mark Barnes/Tom Pygall) jibing on the puffs down the centre of the course closing into the top ten from well back in the fleet. The leaders went left with the exception of Gutted Hedgehog going right. At the top mark the lead bunch remained the same with Boatracer.co.uk (Nils Jolliffe/Jonathon Branch) working their way to the front followed by AT&T, CSC and Ronstan. The majority of the fleet jibed at the top mark and headed down the

left hand side with Readycrest continuing to work the puffs down the middle. In a very tight finish the lead changed five times with Readycrest maintaining course position and holding out AT&T. This resulted in Boatracer.co.uk coming into the committee boat end on starboard and taking first only to be OCS'd. This resulted in Readycrest being first home followed by CSC, AT&T, Ronstan and the Plumbers (Peter Ray/Gareth Wells). Race 9 got under way at the first attempt with a pin bias from Taylor Bay. The fleet again split left and right off the line with the boats that could stay in pressure and negotiate the shifts at the top of the course emerging as the leaders. First round was CSC with PICA (Jamie Mears/Matt Gill), AT&T and Bang Bang (Kieran Livermore/Tim Austin) in close proximity to the following pack. The leaders again predominantly sought the pressure on the left hand side of the run with The Nude (Richie Reynolds/Liss McMillan) gaining the most and leading round the leeward mark. The Plumbers had maintained a position in the top 5 boats as the boats again played the pressure up the second beat. At the top mark the leaders came out of the left with Buggar the Bone (Richard Fisher/Stuart McDonnell) rounding in the top 3. Down the run The Nude again surged into the lead with chasing pack staying in touch as a rain front appeared out of Rose Bay (south of the course). On the next beat those that went left lost out as the wind shifted 15 degrees to the right. The big beneficiaries of this were the Plumbers who led round the windward mark and maintained their lead to the finish. They were followed home by CSC, PICA, Readycrest (again sailing though the fleet) and The Nude.

Due to unstable light breeze and time restrictions Race 10 was not sailed.

On arriving ashore there were two protests that impacted the results. The first between PICA and Gutted Hedgehog resulted in Gutted Hedgehog being disqualified from race 8. The other protest did not proceed which involved Boatracer.co.uk for OCS infringement in Race 8.

This resulted in Gutted Hedgehog winning a very tightly contested World Championships and being the only boat to win two races.

Overall Results:

1st GBR773, Gutted Hedgehog, M Searle & A Ramus 27pts

2nd GBR772, PICA, J Mears & M Gill 28pts

3rd GBR758, AT&T, T Fells & S Dwyer 28pts

4th GBR741, CSC, C Bines & D Gibbons 30pts

5th GBR764, Boatracer.co.uk, N Jolliffe & J Branch 32pts

6th GBR768, Readycrest, M Barnes & T Pygall 43pts

7th AUS368, The Nude, R Reynolds & L McMillan 49pts

8th GBR771, Ronstan, J Pank & R Edwards 64pts

9th AUS373, Nerdwork, M Johnson & M Halkes 68pts

10th AUS370, The Plumbers, P Ray & G Wells 71pts

B14 Australian Nationals – January 2006

The Australian Nationals were held at Woollahra Sailing Club the week before the World Championships, so the event doubled as a warm-up. It was run in conjunction with the PreWorlds Regatta that was open only to international competitors. Competitors shared the same start, but results were calculated separately. Thirty-three boats competed, with 13 from OS.

Superb conditions greeted the fleet for day 1 with a 15-18 knot SE breeze. At the end of two races UK boat Guttled Hedgehog (Matt Searle/Andy Ramus) had chalked up two wins, with Tassie boat Bugger the Bone (Richard Fisher/Stuart McDonnell) 3rd in Race 1, and CST Composites (Clive Watts/Chris Dixon) from NSW 3rd in Race 2.

Day 2 was light, with a SE 5 - 10 knot breeze. The first race of the day was abandoned on NSW Maritime's instructions due to a Tanker sailing through the course. Race 3 was restarted under black flag. The day was dominated by the UK boats, with the best Aussie result a 4th in Race 4 by The Nude (Richie Reynolds/Lissa McMillan) NSW.

Day 3 brought classic conditions to Sydney Harbour with a NE 15 – 20 knot breeze which suited the locals a lot better. In Race 5 Woollahra boats took out 3 of the top 5 places with bangbang (Kieran Livermore/Tim Austin) in 2nd, CST Composites 3rd, and Nerdwork (Marty Johnson/Spike Halkes) 4th. Nerdwork backed up for a 4th in Race 6, with Octopussy (Scott & Cameron Kennedy) NSW top Aussie boat at 4th in Race 7. The final race saw the Australian Nationals' podium placegetters take the first three spots with Nerdwork 1st, followed by bangbang and CST Composites.

Nationals Scratch Results

1. Nerdwork - Marty Johnson/Mike Halkes (WSC) - 30pts
2. CST Composites - Clive Watts/Chris Dixon (WSC) - 36pts
3. bangbang - Kieran Livermore/Tim Austin (WSC) – 39pts

Nationals Handicap Results

1. Octopussy - Scott Kennedy/Cameron Kennedy (WSC)
2. Thrills n Spills – Chris Bibby/Drew Malcolm (Twofold Bay)
3. Hunt Leather – Sophie Hunt/ Andy Payne (WSC)

Combined PreWorlds/Nats Results:

1. Gutted Hedgehog - Matt Searle/Andy Ramus (UK) - 7pts
2. Boatracer.co.uk - Nils Jolliffe/Jonathon Branch (UK) - 23pts
3. Ronstan - Jono Pank/Ritchie Edwards (UK) - 26pts
4. Nerdwork - Marty Johnson/Mike Halkes (AUS) - 30pts
5. CST Composites - Clive Watts/Chris Dixon (AUS) - 36pts
6. bangbang - Kieran Livermore/Tim Austin (AUS) – 39pts
7. Octopussy - Scott Kennedy/Cameron Kennedy (AUS) – 39pts
8. PICA - Jamie Mears/Micro Gill (UK) – 43pts