

B14 Worlds 2001 Lago di Garda

Four teams from Sydney and Melbourne headed to the third B14 World championships in Italy in September 2001 and saw some fierce competition.

The InfoStrada B14 World Championships hosted by Circolo Vela Torbole took place on the stunning Garda lake, off Torbole in Northern Italy.

Famed for its Ora breeze the area was yet another good site chosen for the class championships, following on from Sydney Harbour in January 2000.

Numbers were slightly up on the Sydney event, and the quality of the forty-two strong entry was high. Thirty-six boats from Britain were bolstered by two from France and the four from home soil.

Richie Reynolds and Lissa McMillan racing The Nude, placed 2nd at this year's Nationals led the way for the Aussie camp followed by Abby Parkes and Sophie Hunt sailing Hunt Leather.

Day one started in glorious sunshine and a moderate 10 to 15 knot southerly Ora breeze. Local knowledge undoubtedly proved invaluable with the bending and shifting breezes rolling off the mountains. Quite a number of the Brits had raced there several times and the frontrunners included defending champions Tim Fells and Richard Dowsett. But they were to face strong opposition from Tornado Olympic campaigner Steve Lovegrove who paired with Shaun Barber. Lovegrove and Barber made their mark early by tucking the first race in under their belts, displaying form that would see them eventual title winners.

Reynolds and McMillan (AUS 35) from the Sydney Flying Squadron finished the day in twenty-fourth position scoring a twelfth in the third race. Parkes and Hunt from Woollahra sailing club (Hunt Leather AUS 350) came in at 26th.

Having been treated last time around on Sydney harbour the venue for the third B14 worlds had a lot to live up to as well it did.

Day two and the infamous southerly Ora was gusting to twenty five knots with big waves. The beats were fast and furious and the runs breathtaking with the fleet of skiffs scorching over, under and through the waves. Capsizes were numerous.

Reynolds and McMillan held on tight and clocked up a 16th and 17th taking them up into twentieth overall.

With sixteen DNF's in the first race, and 18 in the second, Abby Parkes and Sophie Hunt did well to hang on mid fleet in their charter boat.

Elsewhere on the race course Tony Eccles and Andy Phillips (AUS 358) suffered damage in the first race putting them out for the rest of the day. Julian Bolleter and Chris Madden sailing Fujitsu lasted until the second race, but then both somersaulted through their mainsail in dramatic fashion during a capsize, closing the day in 33rd.

Day three brought a moderate to fresh northwesterly with thunder, lightning and rain delaying the start. The wind was swinging making calls difficult. The flat water however allowed crews to push their boats to maximum velocity.

The top eight places were changing as each race finished. Fells and Dowsett managed to stave off Lovegrove and Barber snapping at their heels and finished just one point behind.

The 15 knot Ora made for perfect sailing on the penultimate day of the championship. With the wind bend veering to the right of the lake eighty percent of the time and twenty percent to the left, the frontrunners split equally. Matt Snedker and Dave Dobrijevic chose right, pulled out a lead and extended it all the way home. In race two of the day yet another team scored first. David Hayes with Sean Dwyer came in first with Fells and Dowsett in close second.

The day closed with Lovegrove and Barber on a five-point lead with Fells/Dowsett and Hayes/Dwyer equal on 21.

Storm warnings delayed the final day and the fleet stood around in the dinghy park like sprung coils. 3pm and racing was abandoned. Steve Lovegrove, past and current Olympic campaigner who came into contention late in the season, with Shaun Barber had won the title.

Of the Australians, Reynolds and McMillan finished fifteenth overall with Parkes and Hunt in 26th.

AUS 358 sailed by Tony Eccles and Andy Phillips finished 33rd while Julian Bolleter and Christopher Madden (AUS 183) were right behind them in 34th, able to complete the regatta with a mainsail borrowed from a sympathetic British opponent.

Lovegrove paired with Shaun Barber only a matter of weeks prior to the event. "We got the boat two weeks before coming out to Torbole with three days practising and that was it" commented Lovegrove. "We won the opening race which felt good particularly as it was the first race Shaun and I had ever competed in together."

He continued "I went into the regatta pretty focused on how I wanted to get the boat around the track and not veer from that."

Three of the top ten teams had plumbed for new Ovington built boats two of which finished first and second respectively.

The whole bowsprit arrangement had been modified making it easier to pull and leading to fewer problems in such stress area. Both the deck and internal structure below the mast had been stiffened. In the windy conditions experienced in Torbole, fully loaded the boats appeared to hold their rig tension well.

Lovegrove's comments on his new boat were "I have to say that she sailed pretty crisp. It certainly looks a well built, solid boat and of course we were fast."

Dave Ovington was out on the race course and clocked up a good few hours effecting repairs after the Ora had left its mark.

Abby Parkes commented "I've sailed several times at Lake Garda and always love it. After Sydney Harbour it's my favourite sailing spot, great breezes, great scenery and ambience."

"I particularly like the crowd the B14 seems to attract. Outgoing adults who enjoy their racing but don't take themselves too seriously!"

"The quality of the fleet was very high as we expected. Regular sailing in larger fleets is a definite advantage for the UK boats. I was disappointed in our result as we are usually very close to The Nude (AUS 35), but with limited preparation and a big case of nerves, as well as inexperience at this level of competition, it was to be expected."

"Fantastic to see so many women in the class, though I am surprised that there was only one other female skipper present. It's a great boat for women, a real challenge but not so physically demanding that we cant compete on equal terms with the blokes."

Sophie, who came into the class just late last year concluded "We felt that we had great exposure to some top sailing and a terrifically high standard to aspire to for the next worlds."

With the class base moving to Woollahra SC and a new weekend course to train with, the women are looking forward to the fourth World Championships which take place in Melbourne, January 2003.

Top 10 Overall Results:

1 GBR Steve Lovegrove and Shaun Barber	16 pts
2 GBR Tim Fells and Richard Dowsett	21 pts
3 GBR David Hayes and Sean Dwyer	21 pts
4 GBR Matt Snedker and Dave Dobrijevic	24 pts
5 GBR Matt Searle and Richard Bell	33 pts
6 GBR Jono Pank and Richard Edwards	45 pts
7 GBR Jonny Ellis and Spike Daniels	50 pts
8 GBR Chris Sallis and Dick Roe	54 pts

9 GBR Jason Andrews and Marcus Lynch 54 pts
10 GBR Steve Fisher and Neil Barber 55 pts

Australian Results:

15 AUS 35 Richie Reynolds and Lissa McMillan 113 pts
26 AUS 350 Abby Parkes and Sophie Hunt 154 pts
33 AUS 358 Tony Eccles and Andy Phillips 190 pts
34 AUS 183 Julian Bolleter and Chris Madden 191 pts