

# Hobsons Bay Women

make their presence felt at the  
2018 Australian Women's Keelboat Regatta

This year marked the 28<sup>th</sup> running of the Australian Women's Keelboat Regatta (AWKR) which is held annually at Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron over the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June. This year there were 27 boats with over 160 women competing from across Australia and New Zealand. Four skippers from Hobsons Bay Yacht Club competed - Deborah Parker (*Jack Tar*), Maureen Dickins (*Outlaw*), Katrina Hartman (*Take One*) and Edel Doyle (*Rose of Wyndham*).

AWKR commenced with a briefing night on Friday 8 June 2018 at the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron. The Bureau of Meteorology informed us that light winds were forecast for days one and two but there were high hopes that we would get six races in across the three days.

Despite the light forecast I was nervous to be at the helm as this was my first-time helming in AWKR and only my sixth time skippering in my own right. However, the support and encouragement I received from the other competitors as well as Hobsons Bay Yacht Club, Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron, the Cruising Yacht Club of South Australia, Port Adelaide Sailing Club and the Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron was fantastic. Each skipper was keen to offer a piece of advice and assistance. My favourite advice was 'Katrina, we all started where you are. You are just too young to have witnessed our nerves and mistakes'.

As I collected my Skippers' bag and listened to the briefing I realised that in just over 12 hours' time I would be commencing preparations for my first AWKR as a helmswoman.

The excitement kicked in as Celia Dymond presented me with my backstay flag (a first for me!) but the nerves still remained and I had a restless night's sleep thinking about the six races I had ahead of me. As a sailor of two and a half years and a skipper for a handful of races in that time, I was about to compete against some of the best female sailors in Australia and New Zealand.

## Day One

Day One commenced with a long walk down the pier to *Take One* and very little breeze. Competitors drifted about for close to four hours waiting for the wind to appear. The women aboard the 27-strong fleet of mixed yachts entertained themselves with chatting, dancing and a lot of laughter. I particularly enjoyed the singing from *Outlaw* which carried across the fleet in the calm conditions.

Shortly before 2pm when a light breeze arose the race officials called for the first race to start. I watched the Division 1 boats start knowing that in six minutes time I would be competing in my first race in the AWKR.

We managed an excellent start with plenty of clean air and *Take One* was away. The breeze shifted 180 to 270 degrees throughout the race and only reached a top of 5 knots which was a challenge to helm in. At one point there were two boats travelling in opposite directions both with spinnakers up.

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As I sailed across the finish line with *Take One's* spinnaker flying I felt myself relax. Race One was done! I was so proud of the crew for working together as a team especially as it was the first time we had sailed together and the first time the crew had sailed on an S 80.

## Day Two

For Day Two, light winds of 5 to 10 knots held throughout the second day allowing three races to be conducted. The first two courses were sausage courses and the third race of the day added a triangle course for some variety.

Unfortunately, the wind dropped out as we were finishing Race 3 and it was a frustrating drift towards the finish line. The once full spinnakers sagged in the breeze as skippers and crew tried everything to get the spinnakers to fill. I drifted slowly toward the committee boat end of the finish line with tide assistance. The race committee remained very calm as they watched us sail past and bear away past their anchor chain. I told my crew to prepare to fend whilst Lisa Bettcher (RYSAS), my mentor and tactician, told me not to worry and to just 'sail my boat'.

I am informed by the race committee and people on board William Patterson that I "comfortably" cleared the side and anchor chain of the committee boat by about a foot (although the distance varies depending on the number of beers consumed). It certainly gave the committee boat and my crew some excitement in a slow finish. Fortunately, the breeze picked up later in the day with a further two races being run.

The camaraderie amongst the women was evident in Race 3. *James of Wyndham* was the last boat to finish with the rest of the fleet watching while the women tacked towards the finish line in extremely light air. As *James of Wyndham* crossed the line you could hear the cheers and applause from the other crews who were proud of the crew's patience and persistence in challenging conditions.

As the day concluded I was proud of my crew and their performance which only increased when at the Boat Buoy BBQ my support crew informed us that we had placed third on AMS and EHC for the first race of the day. The leader of the S 80 fleet commented that we were with her at every mark putting pressure on her crew who excelled in the regatta – it gave me a touch of pride to have the lead yacht observing my crew.

## Day Three

The forecast was for 10 to 15 knots which seemed like a gale by comparison to the previous two days of racing.

In Race 6 as we rounded the top mark Lisa told us to get the kite down quickly and brace for the breeze we saw coming. Surely not I thought. How can the breeze hit us so quickly? Suddenly a bullet hit us and we rounded up. To say I was nervous was an understatement.

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My trusty main hand eased the main and we righted quickly back on course. "Watch the tell tales" was the call from Lisa – I did my best but was tensed for the next bullet of wind. "Bullet in two boat lengths" was the call from Lisa. It felt like no time and we were rounding

up again this time the toe rail was well and truly under the water. Again, my main hand was on the ball and calmly eased as I gripped the tiller trying to remain composed. We righted and I did a quick head count. All five crew were still on board then a quick sigh of relief before being told I was sailing too high.

As I went to round the bottom mark I could see the impact the sudden hit of breeze had had on the fleet. *Espresso* had lost a brace and their spinnaker was streaming out next to the boat. Most impressive was *Jack Tar* with Deb Parker on the helm. They had lost both the sheet and brace off their spinnaker and it was flying beautifully from the top of the mast. Unable to get the kite down during the race, the crew elected to finish with the kite still up.

The sudden heavy breeze certainly tested my skills and with Lisa's mentoring we finished the race.

We placed third on EHC in Race 5 and I was ecstatic. When I started the regatta I never thought that we would receive a podium finish let alone three. Race 6 was challenging but this gave me confidence in my skills and ability as a helmswoman.

## Results

Hobsons Bay Yacht Club's skippers performed well.

Maureen Dickins (*Outlaw*) placed third on EHC for Race 4.

Edel Doyle (*Rose of Wyndham*) took out third on EHC for Race 3. Edel also won the Sportsmanship award for giving way to *Spike* whilst on starboard tack heading to a mark. *Spike* was on port tack heading to the finish. Edel "I didn't want to impede a fellow competitor who was in serious contention for placing in the regatta." Edel's attitude symbolises the spirit of the regatta of women supporting other women.

Katrina Hartman (*Take One*) took out a third on AMS and EHC in Race 2 and a third on EHC for Race 5.

The overall star performer for Hobsons Bay Yacht Club skippers was Deborah Parker (*Jack Tar*) who took out the honours for the event handicap for Division 2. Deborah Parker placed second in Race 1 on EHC and in the S80 division, second on AMS and EHC and third in the S80 division for Race 4, first on AMS, EHC and in the S80 division for Race 5.

The full results are outlined below.

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Finally, a massive thank you to the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron, all the competitors, boat owners, support crew, race management team and the boat buoys.

Thank you to my support crew Hugh Longbottom and Steve Emery. Hugh encouraged me and provided valuable training for my Adelaide crew. Jim and Robyn Townsend were very generous in lending my crew their J24 *Good Company* to train on.

Steve's post-race analysis of our RaceQs track and advice in boat set up was invaluable and it was great to have him help get the boat in and out of the pen each day (the champagne he brought to the boat on the last day of the regatta was much appreciated).

A huge thank you to Kellie Knowles (RMYS/MYC) for lending me *Take One* and trusting me to take good care of her.

Lastly, but probably most importantly, thank you to my amazing crew for making the trek to come from Adelaide to sail with me this weekend - Lisa Bettcher (RYSAS) for her mentoring, Helena Mrotek (PASC) for her excellent main work – it certainly helped keep me under control in 28 knots of breeze, Marion Toy (CYCSA) for her work on the strings and keen eyes in spotting problems before they became problematic and Lindsey Fenderson (CYCSA) on the foredeck (aka adventure land) for just getting the job done.

Without these four amazing women and support people I would not have been able to achieve so much this weekend.

To all the female sailors I say, "Get involved!" I learnt a lot about myself and my abilities and most importantly I had a fantastic weekend with some amazing female sailors.

## Bring on AWKR 2019!

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## Overall Results

### AMS – Division 1

Scarlet Runner – E Guevara (RSYS)  
Spike – M Derks (FYC)  
Jungle Juice – C Heenan (GSC/NCYC)

### AMS – Division 2

Escape – M Ferrario (TYPBC)  
Recycled Reputation – H Warneke (RQYS)  
Jack Tar – D Parker (HBYC)

### IRC – Division 1

Jungle Juice – C Heenan (GSC/NCYC)  
Scarlet Runner – E Guevara (RSYS)  
Salamander III – M Jones (RMYS)

### IRC – Division 2

Mood Indigo – J Simmonds (DSC)  
Up 'n Go – C Beaufort (RYCV)  
Rock 'n Roll – C Dymond (RMYS)

### EHC – Division 1

Spike – M Derks (FYC)  
Salamander III – M Jones (RMYS)  
Scarlet Runner – E Guevara (RSYS)

### EHC – Division 2

Jack Tar – D Parker (HBYC)  
Imaginer – S Anderson (RFBYC)  
Merak – T Kelly (MYC)

### S80 Division

Escape – M Ferrario (TYPBC)  
Imaginer – S Anderson (RFBYC)  
Recycled Reputation – H Warneke (RQYS)