

Geotherm successfully defends 12ft Skiff Australian Championship

Defending champions Brett Hobson and Peter Nicholson (Geotherm), won the last race of the 12ft Skiff Australian Championship sponsored by Your Move Conveyancing, to clinch the title and the Norman Booth Trophy again, in an event that came down to the wire between four crews.

The Sydney Sailmakers crew of Henry Larkins/Brendan Jenkins (Sydney Flying Squadron) were two points off third place yesterday, but the new pairing was committed, pulling off a pair of second places in the day's two races to finish second overall, three points behind the winners.

Lane Cove 12ft Sailing Skiff Club's Nick Press/Andrew Hay (Sail Inc.) were third overall, just a point behind Sydney Sailmakers when the drop was put in place.

Conducted and hosted by Lane Cove Sailing Club on behalf of the 12 Foot Skiff Association, the 87th Championship was a nailbiter right up to the final race of the six race series.

Race 5 went to Sail Inc. from Sydney Sailmakers and Geotherm (SFS), with Brad Phillips/Oscar Wilson on Terms & Conditions (SFS) fourth, which closed the gap between the four. It left Geotherm only two points ahead of Sail Inc.

Geotherm fought back to win the final race from Sydney Sailmakers and Terms & Conditions, with Sail Inc. fourth. With a drop applied after the final race, the title went to Geotherm which finished on eight points.

Hobson and Nicholson counted three wins in their tally, never straying outside the top three, while Sydney Sailmakers, Sail Inc. and Terms & Conditions claimed a win each in their scores.

It should be mentioned that Geotherm's crew won the 2023 Australian Championship in some extreme winds of up to 30 knots for two days. This year the weather could not have been more different, light easterlies prevailed throughout.

On winning two years running, Pete Nicholson, Geotherm's for' ward hand, had an unusual response: "I hope someone else wins it next year. It's not good to have the same people winning all the time," he said.

"This year, you had four boats in the running, if you hadn't taken out the drop, it was as close as it can get."

Nicholson said this year was definitely harder to win than last year.

"When it's windy, things are quite simple, you just have to stay upright. Sailing up the river, like we did this year, is challenging. You're sailing in shifty conditions, drifting around and you have to make the right tactical calls and cover as many boats as you can all the time."

On whether he and Hobson would continue their solid partnership, Nicholson said, "We will likely continue sailing together. Brett's a nice guy to go sailing with, which makes it easy."

In third place yesterday, Terms & Conditions fell out of a podium place to finish fourth, but did win the Handicap category from Sydney Sailmakers by one point to claim the Colin Clark Memorial Trophy.

With Red Energy finishing the Championship fifth, skipper Murray Press (father of Nick Press) claimed the over-55s Veteran title.

Murray Press: "I think I've won the last five," Press said laughing. "I'm 70 years-old and I'm going to keep sailing until I can't," he said.

Although it was light, Press explained, "With the big rigs on, you still sailed with two on the wire, so it was challenging but good sailing. It was close and competitive. The whole fleet was finishing within 12 minutes.

"The bottom mark roundings were hard. Everyone coming in hot and then dropping their kites," he said.

"It was great to have 22 boats, including two from Queensland. The top four got away from the rest, but that happens sometimes."

The Junior title for under 25s went to Shu-Styx Fabrications skipper, Will Beck, who also won the Nimble first time skipper award at the 2023 Interdominion in Brisbane.

Thanks go to Lane Cove 12ft Sailing Skiff Club for hosting the event, Race Officer Robyn Tames and the volunteers, who help make these events possible.

All courses for the Australian Championship were held west of the Harbour Bridge in the vicinity of the Parramatta and Lane Cove rivers and taking in some of Sydney's famous islands.

There were 22 skiffs entered in the Championship, including two Queensland crews, Giddy Up and Tank Girl representing Darling Point Sailing Squadron in Manly.

For all information, including full results on the '12s', please visit:

<https://www.skiff.org.au/87th-12ft-skiff-aust-championship>

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