

Final Heat Aussie Championships 3 February 2024



It was always going to be a nor-easterly and the talk in the park was whether or not it would get up to the 15-20 knots that some forecasts were predicting. So when it came to launching, all boats went for second sails with a number two or three jib. For the second time, the A4 crew went out disguised as Top Weight with a suitable adjustment from the Race Committee.



Alruth was again skippered by Michael Carter with Al Robertson still recovering from his injured shoulder. Going into the third and final heat, Alruth had sailed well enough to be only a point behind Yendys for the coveted Galloping Ghost Trophy awarded to the Australian Champion. After finishing times were adjusted, if Alruth finished ahead or within three minutes of Yendys in this third and final heat, Alruth could take home the chocolates.

At Clark Island, the Race Committee flagged the famous No. 1 course and set a starting line with a slight pin-end bias. By start time, the breeze had a fair bit of north in it and was up over 12 knots.

A scratch start is always a great sight – especially since it is not always the case that skippers choose to obey the pre-start racing rules. So, with most of the fleet running down the line with seconds to go, there were calls aplenty as leeward boats called for their luffing rights. Aberdare came out worst against the windward Australia and missed the pin while Australia squeaked through. This was to prove a bonus for Yendys which had kept clear and hit the line with speed running over the top of Australia and watching Aberdare having to tack off on port behind the rest of the field.

Aberdare was again skippered by Cam Gundy in the absence of John Winning whose approaching hip operation has left him ashore for the last two heats. And a late withdrawal by Neville Turbit saw John Lewis step in to take Tangalooma to sea.





Every Sydney Harbour sailor knows that it is up the western shore in a nor'easter to take advantage of the smoother waters and the left-hand shifts off the headlands. And so it was for the first beat to the Beashel Buoy where Yendys had established a handy lead of a minute and a half over Alruth and Aberdare. With its kite up, Yendys hoisted the new ringtail and powered down the run before dropping it at Shark Island and jibing for Clark Island with another minute added to the lead thanks to that very lovely new sail. By now the breeze had stiffened and 15 knots greeted the fleet at the Clark Island mark.





Nothing ever goes perfectly in the historic skiffs and Yendys spinnaker drop ran into difficulties with the brace under the boat. Problem soon sorted, Yendys tacked off for Chowder Bay with Aberdare and Alruth in hot pursuit and about two minutes adrift. Making the best of the rough water and a steady, but hard breeze, Yendys rounded the Chowder Bay mark having maintained the distance but still needing to be sure of the three minute gap to Alruth to win the title. (Yendys is a renowned light weather flyer, but has to work hard against boats like Alruth and Aberdare, especially off a wind).





So, it was on with the small shy spinnaker for a wild ride across to the jibe mark at Shark Island. And with that done, Yendys headed to the finish to cross just over four minutes ahead of Aberdare and five and half minutes ahead of Alruth to secure the Title again this year.



The Galloping Ghost Trophy.

Australian Championship 2024 winner - Yendys

Congratulations to Yendys and her crew: Barry "Bazza" Watson, Don "The Admiral" Buckley, Andrew "Bucko" Buckland, Russell "Rusty" Debney, Ann Prosser, Jack Tang and Michael van Stom, the 2024 Historic 18' Skiff Australian Champions



Meanwhile, back in the fleet, the race was on for the Raw Meat Trophy, for the first on handicap. The little six-foot beam Australia has been improving every time out this year under Marshall Flanagan and his crew and it was a fitting reward for them to finish second on handicap behind the mighty Britannia and to win the Raw Meat for 2024. One of their main competitors, A4, alias Top Weight, nearly perished when they discovered that the luff on their spinnaker was too long for the reefed mainsail on Top Weight leading to a costly drop in places while they fought to survive an unplanned prawning adventure.

Thanks to Christophe Favreau for coming out and photographing the race!



BOAT	SKIPPER	FINISH TIME
YENDYS	Barry Watson	1.29.13
ABERDARE	Cam Gundy	1.33.22
ALRUTH	Michael Carter	1.34.57
AUSTRALIA	Marshall Flanagan	1.38.15
TOP WEIGHT	Terry Stewart	1.44.28
BRITANNIA	David Paget	1.45.36
THE MISTAKE	Jerry Tickner	1.48.34
TANGALOOMA	John Lewis	1.49.16
SCOT		DNC
MYRA TOO		DNC
AUSTRALIA IV		DNC

Thanks to the skippers, crews, volunteers, starters and officials.