

SFS Race Report 09 March 2024 Autumn Series Heat 4

A Beautiful Day on Sydney Harbour – and a Photo Finish



An iconic (and busy) day out on the harbour.

Photo from YouTube.com:18footersTV: JJ GILTINAN CHAMPIONSHIP - Race 8.
The 'armada' of Lasers.



Autumn is always a wonderful time to be on Sydney Harbour. By now the temperature has usually dropped far enough to mean the end of the dreaded black nor'easters driven by high summer temperatures over the west of the Sydney Basin. And the hard southerlies have also pretty much disappeared. But it can also mean some variation in the conditions as the breeze settles into a pattern for the day.

A sunny Saturday offered a classic nor-easter and the only question in the park was how hard was it going to blow? Most boats opted for one reef – just in case. And those that went for a No. 2 jib turned out to be on the money.

The starters chose a line to the west of Clark Island to keep out of the way of the penultimate JJ Giltinan race for the Modern 18s Worlds. A Mark Foy handicap start on the No.1 North East course saw the fleet split across the Harbour with some skippers heading east rather than favouring the traditional track to Bradleys Head and up the western shore. Neither seemed to be favoured, with the 10-12 knot breeze strongest on the edges and light in the middle. A change in the tide from ebb to flood soon after the start meant that it could be largely ignored.



Rigging the boats in the park.

Photos thanks to SFS Life member and legendary club volunteer, Barley Stewart.

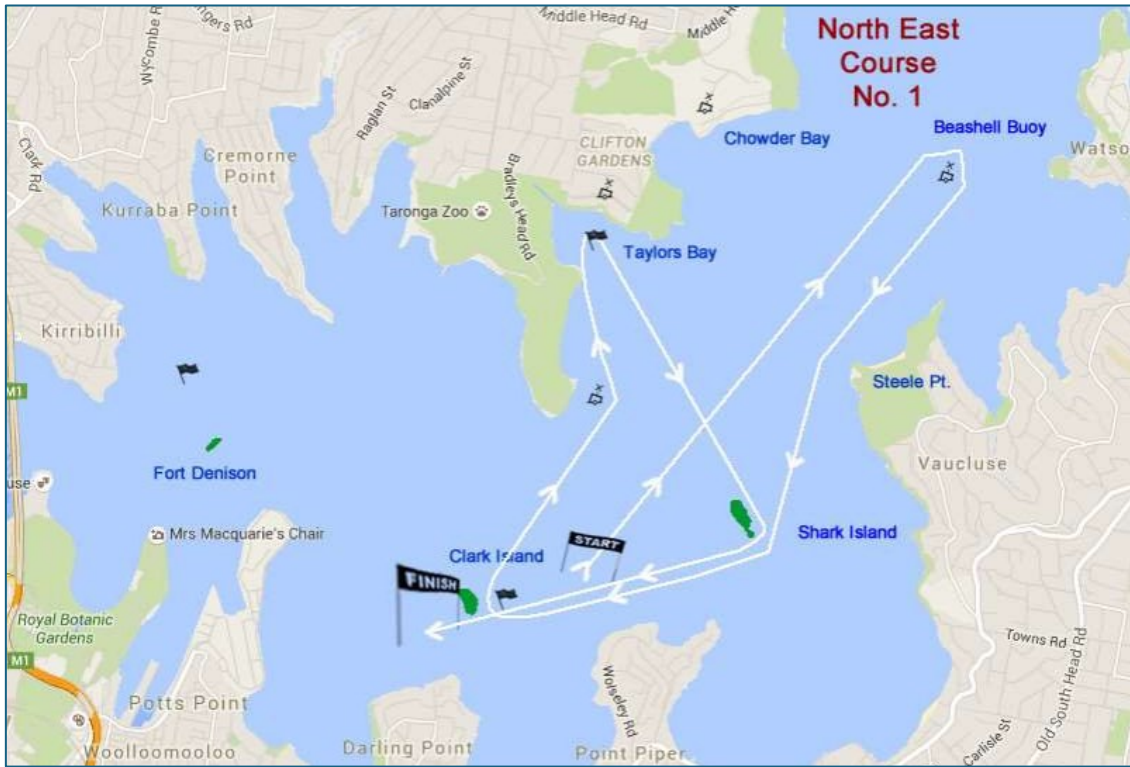




The fleet launching.

Photos thanks to SFS Life member and legendary club volunteer, Barley Stewart.





At the top mark, the fleet rounded pretty much in their starting order, but with Tangalooma maintaining a clear gap to the rest of the fleet. Australia, The Mistake and Top Weight rounded in close contention. Alruth had made up good ground and continued to do so on the almost square run down to Shark Island. Yendys, challenged by its scratch handicap in the light conditions, was still well back by the time that the fleet reached the jibe mark, but was treated to the great sight ahead of the modern 18s, on a similar course, converging with the historic at the mark.

This can often mean trouble when the historic 18s have to drop the jib, remove the backstay, swing the pole around, haul on the new brace, adjust the runners, tie on the new backstay, rehoist the jib and get everything back in place again on a starboard tack. But this time, trouble avoided, Tangalooma rounded first followed by The Mistake, Top Weight (alias A4), Alruth, Australia and Yendys.



Old and new approaching the Shark Mark.

Photo from YouTube.com:18footersTV: JJ GILTINAN CHAMPIONSHIP - Race 8.



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Bit of traffic rounding Shark.

Photo courtesy of SFS Life Member, and legendary race official, Chuck Goodfellow.



The infamous gybe around Shark Mark – Alruth coming in on port and Top Weight just completing their gybe.

Photo from YouTube.com:18footersTV: JJ GILTINAN CHAMPIONSHIP - Race 8.

Any race on the No.1 Course is often won or lost on the work up to Chowder Bay. It usually pays to keep towards Bradleys and the cardinal mark at the entrance to Taylors Bay. In shifty conditions, a leg or two out into the middle can mean less tacks but can also mean a longer course. Yendys, under the helm of its regular sheet hand, Michael Van Stom, and under the tactical guidance of Don "The Admiral" Buckley in the absence of Bucko who was off commentating on the JJs, plugged for the western shore and by the rounding mark in Chowder Bay had picked off the rest of the fleet, rounding second after Tangalooma with a short gap to Alruth, followed by Top Weight, The Mistake and Australia.

Most of us can tell a tale of a swim on the shy run to Shark Island. It is often fast and tight and if you get it wrong, then there is a price to pay as The Mistake discovered with a spinnaker mishap. Meanwhile, Yendys had closed the gap on Tangalooma by the final jibe at Shark Island. Tangalooma dropped its shy spinnaker and sensing a drop in the breeze on the run to the finish, set a larger kite. Yendys, about ten boat lengths behind, jibed their smaller reaching spinnaker with a plan to heat up after the Shark Island lee and then run down on to the leader. The plan worked and then it nearly failed.



The Mistake after some spinnaker trouble off Chowder Bay.
Photo from YouTube.com:18footersTV: JJ GILTINAN CHAMPIONSHIP - Race 8.

Tangalooma is surprisingly slippery downwind. And well sailed, as it was by Neville Turbit and his experienced crew, Tangalooma kept pace with Yendys in a tense battle to the finish. Yendys, after some tactical debate onboard and deciding to ditch the ringtail and concentrate on taking the lead. was able to maintain a windward cover on Tangles and despite its smaller kite greeted the finish boat a mere one second ahead to take the win.



Top Weight (aka AUSIV) the only ringtail set on the day.
Photos courtesy of SFS Life Member, and legendary race official, Chuck Goodfellow.



Tangalooma leading the fleet on the run to the Shark Mark.

Photo courtesy of SFS Life Member, and legendary race official, Chuck Goodfellow.

Results for Race 18 Saturday 9th Mar 2024. Autumn Series H4
Start time: 14:30. Fastest time: 1:42:04

Skiff	Skipper	Handicap (Mins)	Start Time	Finish Time	Race Time
Yendys	Michael Van Stom	0	14:30:00	16:12:04	1:42:04
Tangalooma	Neville Turbit	15	14:15:00	16:12:05	1:57:05
Alruth	Alan Robertson	5	14:25:00	16:14:02	1:49:02
Top Weight	Terry Stewart	9	14:19:00	16:18:22	1:57:22
Australia	Marshall Flanagan	11	14:19:00	16:25:05	2:06:05
The Mistake	Jerry Tickner	13	14:17:00	DNF	
Britannia	DNC				
Aberdare	DNC				
Scot	DNC				
Australia IV	DNC				
Myra Too	DNC				

With the exception of the aquatic Mistake crew perhaps, most agreed that it was a beautiful day to be sailing on Sydney Harbour. Sort of a “good to be alive” day. Once again and as always, thanks to the volunteers, rescue boats and the race committee for their great assistance. Couldn’t do it without you !

**Only 2 more races to go. Next week is Matthew Flinders Day.
 See you at the Squaddie!**