

RACE 4 OF THE 2024-2025 SEASON



Photo thanks to Jamie Watt

Here are six good reasons to get off the beach and out to the start line early:

1. When you are late, mistakes are made in finalising the rigging. Jockey poles, stumps, bailing dishes and even sheets get left behind. Bowlines tend to unravel.
2. The crew set off with a high level of anxiety that often translates into a poor performance on the racecourse and a disappointed crew back on the beach after the race.
3. You miss out on that vital 10-15 minutes prior to your start time observing how the breeze is oscillating on the first upwind leg, how the tide is running and which side of the course looks best.
4. There is always some degree of bias on the start line (despite the best efforts of the PRO) and late starters usually have no idea and no chance of grabbing that truly excellent start.
5. The handicapper aims to have the entire fleet finishing the course within a couple of minutes of each other. The late starter gives away a measurable competitive advantage that is rarely recoverable.
6. It makes it less of a race for those who start on time.

We shall return to all of that shortly ...



Photo thanks to Dom from the rescue boat.

Another cloudy Saturday was forecast with all of the pundits confident that we could expect a gradient nor'easter of around 12 knots to develop about start time. Meanwhile, during the morning, the breeze hung in the east with a few misty showers dampening the breeze as well as dampening crews rigging in the park.

The number 1 course, the NE course, was chosen by the Race Committee for the first time this season. This is a challenging course with a long initial upwind leg followed by an equally long spinnaker leg and a sometimes perilous jibe at Shark Island. A three-quarter shy run to the bottom mark off Clark Island is followed by a short work up to Chowder Bay and then, for some, the best ride of the day with a tight shy run across to Shark Island before another jibe and the final run to the finish.



Only five boats signalled that they would start. The fleet was led away by Britannia on her 19 minute limit handicap. She was to be followed by Mistake (welcome back, Jerry) on 17 minutes and Australia on 15 minutes – considered by most to be pretty generous handicaps for both, given the experience on board Mistake and the real improvement being shown by Australia in recent races. Alas, both were seriously late for their start, so much so that Mistake might have made the podium and Australia might have won, based on their eventual finishing times. Did we mention the importance of 2eting off the beach early?

By the time the scratch boat, Yendys sailed by its Australian Champion skipper, Barry “Bazza” Watson, set off at the favoured pin end, 1 second only behind their start time, Britannia had made good ground and rounded the Sow and Pigs Mark (that’s what they want us to call it these days) well ahead of Top Weight and the late starters. There was a lot more east in the breeze by this point and, as the old salts know, it is as well to steer well away from the big lee that forms off Steel Point. Britannia took this advice and then dropped early before jibing well ahead and heading for Clark Island.



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Meanwhile, Yendys had made good progress and after threatening Top Weight in second, took over second place by the time they reached the bottom mark. At Clark Island, Britannia rounded over 6 minutes ahead of Yendys with Top Weight a minute behind. Australia, too, had done well despite her late start, and rounded on 5 seconds behind Top Weight, with Mistake a further 2 minutes adrift.

On the short work up to Chowder Bay, the range and direction of the breeze was “all over the place” – simply no other words for it. Averaging ENE, it oscillated from NE to ESE and this was made more difficult by an increase in strength and wind against tide making for a lumpy seaway.

Britannia had held Yendys off to round the Chowder Bay Mark just ahead. Yendys seemed to head up to take the lead, before taking time to set a peak head shy kite for the fast run to Shark Island. But then a funny thing happened. Dave Paget on the helm of Britannia stayed lower, set Britannia’s legendary ballooner and began to narrow the gap. The limit boat was fast catching the scratch boat against all odds. T’was great to see! But then, with her shy white kite finally set, Yendys took off and completed the second jibe at Shark Island 45 seconds ahead of Britannia.

On that fast leg of the number 1 course, Britannia had lost only a minute and a half against the fastest boat in the fleet. Well done, Britannia ... Smithy would be very proud of you! And maybe some of the other boats might think about that dusty ballooner in the sail locker as a possible option when the next really tight shy run is offered up. (You can usually dual-purpose it for a masthead kite on a short pole as well).

And so to the finish where Yendys, yet again, took the win, finishing over 2 minutes ahead of the well-sailed Britannia, with Australia, equally well sailed by Marshall Flanagan and crew, three and a half minutes further back – and no doubt rueing that late start and a lost opportunity to chalk up a win.



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Results for Saturday 2 November 2024

Spring Series Heat 4

Start Time:	2:30PM		Start	Course	Breeze	Strength	Tide
Fastest Time:	Yendys 1:29:57		Handicap	1	NE	5-12 kts	Ebb

Skiff	Skipper	Handicap (Mins)	Start Time	Finish Time	Race Time	H'cap Place	Ringtail
Yendys	Bazza Watson	0	2:30:00 PM	3:59:57 PM	1:29:57	1	
Britannia	David Paget	19	2:11:00 PM	4:02:13 PM	1:51:13	3	
Australia	Marshall Flanagan	15	2:15:00 PM	4:05:55 PM	1:50:55	2	
Top Weight	Terry Stewart	14	2:16:00 PM	4:07:52 PM	1:51:52	4	
The Mistake	Jerry Tickner	17	2:13:00 PM	4:11:28 PM	1:58:28	5	
Tangalooma	Neville Turbit	19	DNC				
Alruth	Scott Spackman	9	DNC				
Aberdare	Woody Winning	0	DNC				
Scot	Jamie Watt	17	DNC				
Australia IV		15	DNC				
Myra Too			DNC				

Note: Mistake 6 min late to start
Australia 8 min late to start

One thing that you learn about sailing open skiffs is that what can go wrong, will go wrong. So it was for Britannia. After sailing a great race and finishing a good second, someone took their eye off the game after finishing and during the kite drop, resulting in a very unfortunate swim at the head of Rushcutters Bay. Thanks to Barley and Stewart on the rescue boats, the novice, sodden crewmembers on the Brit were treated to a long cold tow, unrigging on the beach and a cold trip back to Careening Cove where Robbo managed to lift their spirits with the traditional drop of rum. One of the new crew was heard to say that they would definitely be back if this was what memories were made of.



Photo thanks to Barley Stewart



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Thanks to the volunteers, Barley and Sheri, Stewart and Dom, Rob Gordon and Jamie on the 379, and Rusty and Ben on the Killo.



Photo thanks to Barley Stewart



Photo thanks to Dom on the rescue boat.

It's on again next Saturday. See you at the Squaddy.



Photo thanks to Jamie Watt