

30th SABRE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS 2007-08

Local skipper John Gratton from the Brighton & Seacliff Yacht Club in Adelaide, South Australia won the 30th Sabre Australian Championship by four points. John sealed the championship when he won the final heat, his first National heat win in the fourteen Sabre Nationals in which he has competed.

A strong fleet of 72 entrants sailed in a challenging mixture of hot weather and varying wind conditions ranging from light, variable N-NE breezes and strong local offshore SE winds, to some typical Brighton seabreezes.

Gate starts were used in the regatta, which was once again very capably run by the Brighton & Seacliff Yacht Club, the Club having previously hosted the 505 Worlds in February 2007.

The regatta started well for the Gratton family, with John's daughter Rebecca winning the Invitation Race and John following in second place, ahead of Tasmanian Ron Fergusson in third.

The first two Heats were sailed in light winds and were won by the fleet's light weather specialists Fiona Wilcox (Vic) and Bek Gratton (SA) respectively.

Heats 3 and 4 saw stronger breezes and both were won by defending champion Wayne Bates (Vic) with Callum Burns, also from Victoria finishing second in the two races. Many competitors had returned to the beach after Heat 3 believing that the wind had increased such that Heat 4 would be abandoned for the day. The Race Committee however believed that racing was possible and Heat 4 was run with only 19 starters lining up.

The remaining three Heats saw the return of lighter breezes again. Heats 5 and 6 were won by emerging title contenders, former National Champion Alan Riley and Tim Heaney (Vic) respectively, and going into the seventh and final Heat the overall standings (with a worst heat drop) were: Tim Heaney (18), Wayne Bates (23), John Gratton (27), Alan Riley (28) and Chris Dance (42).

In Heat 7 John Gratton was the gate boat and he led at the first mark. A significant change in wind direction required a course change by the Race Committee and on the final beat to the finish John was able to edge out Kylie Baker (SA), Fiona Wilcox and Alan Riley to record a win. The win gave John the National Championship, with title contenders Wayne Bates finishing 10th and Tim Heaney in 25th place.

It was John Gratton's first National Championship title win in the Sabre Class, after being runner up on two occasions and third placed four times, in previous Sabre Nationals. His two year old boat Get Real is a current Young Marine Services hull, fitted with YMS foils and John Clifton sails.