

**A Pair of Jacks Come up Trumps at the Minnow Nationals and States** by Brook Felsenthal

I have just returned from watching some of the best junior racing I have ever seen at the 2009 State Titles at Sorrento.

At the pointy end of the fleet are a group of half a dozen sailors who are driving each other to new levels of competitive sailing. Any one of these sailors could have won the State or National Titles and should be extremely proud of their achievements.

Masts falling down, being pipped by half a boat length or being just over the line at the start, was the difference between first and any result, and like the January Nationals it all came down to the last heat.

Looking back the two Jack's (Jack Felsenthal and Jack Graves, who coincidentally sail together in their school's Teams Racing) had more in common than their name: for each regatta (they won) they had no boat breakdowns (checking and rechecking your gear is vital) and both only had one heat win in their respective regattas, yet they consistently put in solid performances which saw more podium finishes than their competitors. The point is that you do not need to win races to win regattas, but you need to keep trucking and focused over the whole series in all conditions.

Further down the fleet similar battles were going on in other categories around the course.

As in most regattas after the first heat every boat will identify a close competitor and there are so many races within races.

In the Nationals it was extremely pleasing to see almost all of the fleet getting around the course in stronger and stronger conditions.

As always it is great to see sailors achieve personal bests and improve over both series.

With a fleet of 102 Minnows in the Nationals and 69 in the States, the Minnows are the largest Victorian (and arguably National) junior fleet.

It was interesting to note that Sarah Blanck started in Minnows with the best result in the 70's at the Nationals, so any of you can reach the Olympics.

Yacht Clubs represented included Black Rock, Blairgowrie, Parkdale, Sorrento, Davey's Bay, McCrae, Darwin and Perth.

Perhaps the highlight for the association were the 43 entrants in the National's Novice Division. As a percentage of the total fleet this far exceeded any Nationals and showed the future strength of the class.

The Victorian Association is growing rapidly with membership increasing 20% over the past year.

Financially the MSA is possibly in the best shape of any class association in Australia.

We have been fortunate to have had the backing of a long standing and generous sponsor in Channel 7.

The committee is investigating coaching programs including the provision of audio headsets which will be an invaluable training tool. The association has endorsed a training/racing program to be held in conjunction with Black Rocks Icicle Regatta beginning 25 April, more details to follow.

And now to the results...

#### In the Minnow Nationals Novice Division

In the Novice Division, Sorrento SSCBC filled the first three places but Blairgowrie YS filled six of the next seven places. Congrats to Ben Hartnett, Hugo Llewellyn, Charlie Dixon, Hayden Harding and Jeremy Phillips for their overall results.

In the Junior Novice Division congratulations to Ned Lindholm, Natasha Martin, Grace Cockman, Camilla Gray and Campbell Rickard.

The novice fleet, apart from the invitation race, had great conditions with relatively light winds hardly a scary moment so all of these sailors should be back in the open fleet next titles.

#### Minnow Titles Open Division

Representing both Black Rock Yacht Club and Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club Jack Felsenthal took out the 2009 Minnow Nationals by the narrowest of margins, from Sorrento's Tess Lloyd. Zac O'Connell was third on a countback from Jack Graves with Sam Hannah close behind in fifth.

Jack Graves was the Junior Champion again narrowly ahead of Sam Hannah.

### State Titles Minnow Novice

A fleet of twelve sailors (seven of which were girls) had some tight racing in a four race event. Will Fox in Bluey held out three girls Rommy Abbott, Molly Ford and Frances Devereux. Fifth was Chester Halstead and while I am going as they all deserve a mention. Maddy Butler, Milly Mulcahy, Jackson Day, Olivia Kudnig, Keelan Murphy, Sophie Warner & Jordan Murphy all deserve a mention just for finishing.

### State Titles Open

With a range of conditions over the two days - up to 22 knots on Saturday and then a maximum of 10 on Sunday, sailors had to show their versatility.

In the end it was so close no one knew who had won. Jack Graves held off both Tess Lloyd and Tom Trotman by a point to win the event as both an open and a junior sailor.

There are too many great performances to mention in a fleet of 54 which was actually a bigger fleet than the Nationals.

Well done to everyone who sailed, you are all far better sailors than you were two months ago.