

Offshore

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Yachting



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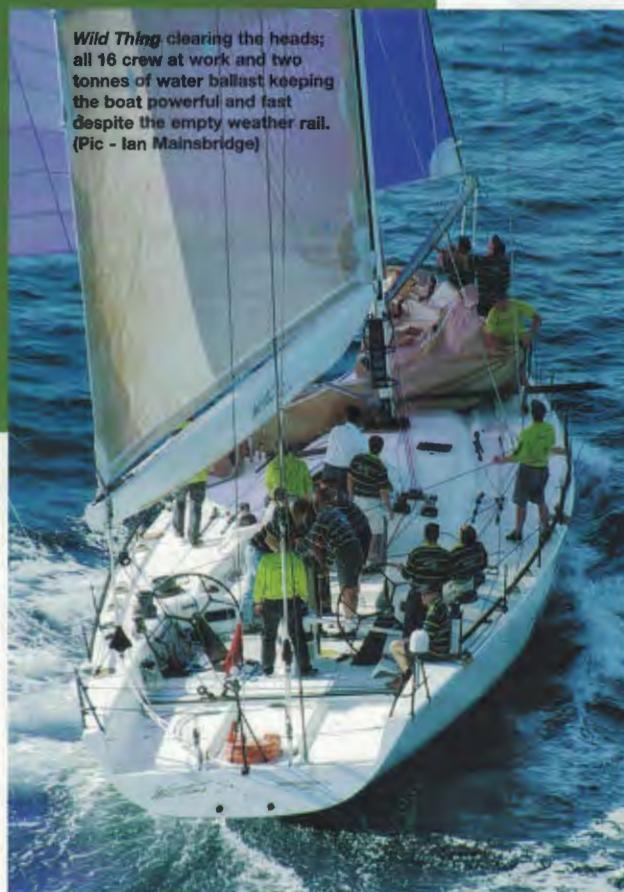
Big boats dominate

(Pic - Ian Mainsbridge)

The Cruising Yacht Club of Australia's 15th annual midwinter race from Sydney to Southport proved to be a slow, relatively uneventful passage up the New South Wales North Coast. Peter Campbell reports.

Big boats dominated the overall results in each category of the 15th annual Sydney to Gold Coast Race. IMS overall went to Syd Fischer's Farr 50, *Ragamuffin*, IRC overall to Martin James' Farr 65, *Infinity III*, and PHS overall to Geoff Lavis' Inglis/Murray 50 *Wild Thing II*, originally owned by Grant Wharington.

Wharington's current *Wild Thing*, the Andy Dovell-designed water-ballasted 70 footer, again outsailed George Snow's conventional Scott Jutson-designed maxi *Brindabella* for line honours. The only drama of the 386 nautical mile race came at the start when a logjam of yachts at the windward end of the line saw several minor collisions. Both *Brindabella* and Sean Langman's Open 60 *Xena* suffered badly. In contrast, *Wild Thing* bounced out of the line under a shy spinnaker as a light sou'easter filled in just minutes before the start. She was never headed.



Wild Thing clearing the heads; all 16 crew at work and two tonnes of water ballast keeping the boat powerful and fast despite the empty weather rail. (Pic - Ian Mainsbridge)

Brindabella closed up when *Wild Thing* found a hole off Crowdy Head, before Wharington and crew found new breeze to move to a five mile lead. In a report to race control, Wharington said he was taking full advantage of *Wild Thing*'s improved water ballast capabilities and quick acceleration, the result of removing 2000 kilos from the yacht before this race. "While *Brindabella*'s new masthead spinnaker is helping

them downwind, our lighter weight, plus the water ballast, means we are smokin'," he said.

Brindabella again closed the gap the next morning to just 80 metres, with 35 miles to go to the finish of Southport's Main Beach. "It all started again when the sun came up," reported *Brindabella* crewman Geoff Cropley. "From here on, it will be a trimmer's race."

It proved to be just that, with the last few miles seeing a gybing duel under spinnaker, both owners steering, as they picked the wind angles along the Gold Coast beaches.

In the end *Wild Thing* crossed just 10 minutes in front, in the slow elapsed time of one day 23 hours 50 minutes 46 seconds.

Of the other two water-ballasted big boats *Xena* finished third across the line but the Open 60 *RSL.com* (John Biddlecombe) was in eighth place.

While *Wild Thing* and *Brindabella* finished early on the Monday afternoon, the next eight boats were spread out

over another 10 hours and the first of the 40-footers did not finish until around 2.30 am next day.

Syd Fischer, sailing in his first Sydney to Gold Coast with his Farr 50 *Ragamuffin*, finished late on Monday evening to win IMS Overall and Division 1 from Kevan Pearce's Farr 47 *Ausmaid*. IMS Division 2 went to the J35 *J Force* (Moty Bergman) from Andrew Cochrane's Stewart 34 *Pendragon*, which has been placed in every Gold Coast in which it has competed.

Much the same pattern applied in the IRC overall results, with first place on corrected time going to *Infinity III*. Second on IRC was the 40 footer to finish, Richard Perini's Farr 40 OD *Corinthian Doors*. Best of the new Sydney 38s was Barry Moore's *Blowfly* from the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club which

placed seventh overall in IRC.

IRC Division B was not decided until the last few boats crossed the line, with the experienced EastSail skipper Peter Franki steering the Sydney 36 *Salt Shaker* to an impressive win from the Farr 37 *Pippin* (David Taylor) and the Queensland based Mumm 30 *Addiction* (Stewart Lewis).

The big boat success continued in the PHS category with overall first place going to *Wild Thing II* and second to *Marchioness*. Third was Geoff Lucas' Northshore 38 *St Malo*, the only "small" boat to feature overall.

A fleet of 64 boats started. Five retired because of the slow race including Don Mickleborough's veteran timber boat *Southerly*, making a comeback with the 2000 Telstra Sydney to Hobart Race in mind.

THE VIEW FROM THE FLEET

Syd Fisher - owner/skipper of *Ragamuffin* (first overall, IMS)

Ragamuffin had a long duel with *Ausmaid* for IMS honours; "*Ausmaid* was right up with us in the first half of the race and we got the win in the fairer winds in the second half" said Fisher. Fisher said that *Ragamuffin* didn't gain her advantage at any particular point of sail; he describes the Farr 50 simply as "a pretty good allround boat with a pretty good allround rating."

Roger Hickman - skipper of *Ausmaid* (second overall, IMS)

"It was a great race; the organisation was excellent and it was very competitive" said "Hicko", the skipper of Kevan Pearce's Farr 47- "one of the most beautiful boats in the country to sail".

"Until we were 60 miles from the finish we hung onto *Ragamuffin*. Off Yamba at midday *Ragamuffin* went offshore and got the north-easter when it came in; they were about four miles ahead and got about two hours ahead. The whole race was about strategically placing yourself for the next puff of wind, working the thermals and gradients."

Martin James- owner/skipper *Infinity III* (first overall, IRC)

"We had a great time; tactically we found it an interesting race, because there didn't seem to be many gains by going out or hanging right into the coast" said Martin James of the Farr 65's win in the big and competitive IRC division. "There seemed to be a line across the fleet late Sunday afternoon; that seemed to be where we made our break." *Infinity* also gained by using a new, small asymmetric on the close reaches (a weak point for short-overlap rigs). "What the asymmetric did was enable us to keep the boat pressured up close reaching; it was a big help. We carried the asymmetric from Ballina or

Results

IMS:

Overall and Division A:

1. *Ragamuffin*, Farr 50 (Syd Fischer, NSW)
2. *Ausmaid*, Farr 47 (Kevan Pearce, SA)
3. *Brindabella*, Jutson 76 (George Snow, NSW)

Division B:

1. *J Force*, J35 (Moty Bergman, NSW)
2. *Pendragon*, Stewart 34 (Andrew Cochrane, NSW)
3. *Lady Penrhyn*, Swarbrick 111 (Greg Stewart, NSW)

IRC:

Overall and Division A:

1. *Infinity III*, Farr 65 (Martin James, NSW)
2. *Corinthian Doors*, Farr 40 OD (Richard Perini, NSW)
3. *2GB Titan Ford*, Farr 50 (Julie Hodder, Peter Sorenson, Stan Zemanek, NSW)

Division B:

1. *Salt Shaker*, Sydney 36 (Peter Franki, NSW)
2. *Pippin*, Farr 37 (David Taylor, NSW)
3. *Addiction*, Mumm 30 (Stewart Lewis, Qld)

PHS:

Overall:

1. *Wild Thing II*, Inglis/Murray 52 (Geoff Lavis, NSW)
2. *Marchioness*, Lavranos/Steinman 76 (Michael Cranitch/Des Kennedy/Peter Markos, NSW)
3. *St Malo*, Northshore 38 (Geoff Lucas, NSW)

Division 1:

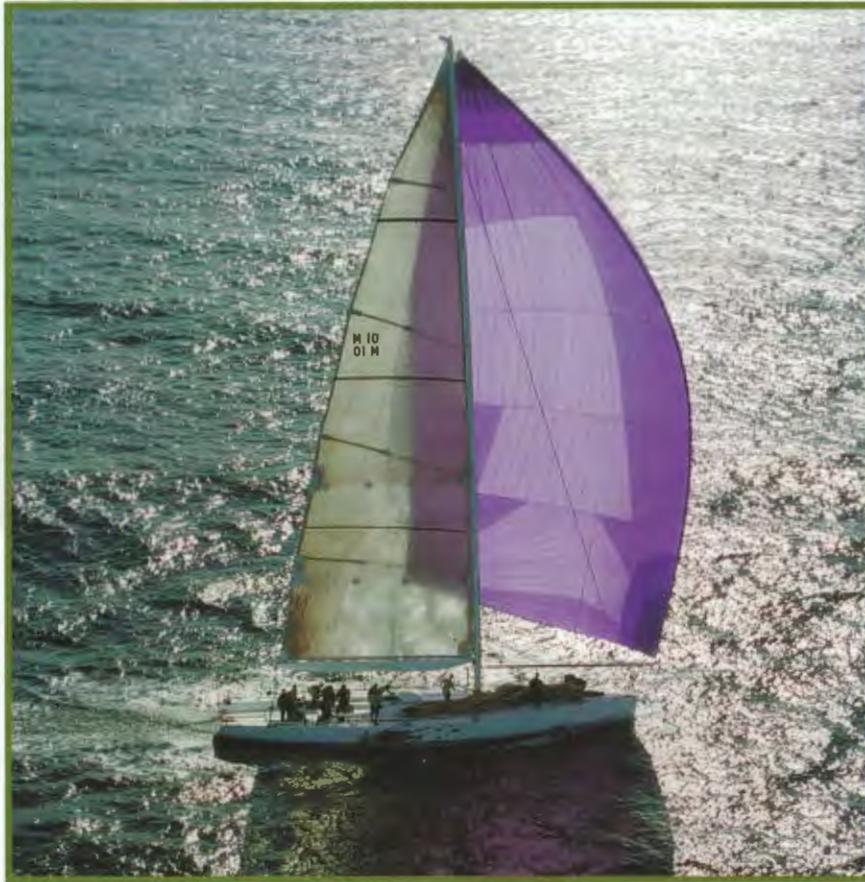
1. *Wild Thing II*
2. *Marchioness*
3. *Original Sin*, Young 40 (Chris Dare, Vic)

Division 2:

1. *St Malo*
2. *Ellene*, Northshore 38 (Anthony Levett, NSW)
3. *Farr Horizons*, Farr 40 (Ivan Resnekov, NSW)

Line Honours:

1. *Wild Thing*, Murray/Burns/Dovell 70 (Grant Wharington, Vic) 1 day 23 hours 50 minutes 48 seconds.
2. *Brindabella*, Jutson 76 (George Snow, NSW) 2 days 00 hours 00 minutes 39 seconds.
3. *Xena*, Open 60 (Sean Langman, NSW) 2 days 1 hour 41 minutes 44 seconds.



Wild Thing's new masthead asymmetric and water ballast enabled her to keep pace with the bigger *Brindabella* in the reaching conditions
(Pic - Ian Mainsbridge)

Point Danger all the way to the finish; that period is where we managed to get the miles on *Corinthian Doors*. It's not a big sail, so we don't get a penalty under IRC" said James.

**Geoff Lavis - Owner/skipper
Wild Thing (first overall, PHS)**

Geoff Lavis' Inglis/Murray 50 *Wild Thing* (racing as *Wild Thing II* just for this event) had "an enjoyable race, a nice easy race" says Lavis. "We got very little water over the deck, three or four splashes. I think we sailed reasonably well, and we had our luck at the right time. 'Twirler' (Darren Jones from Hood Sails) had a major input into the result."

"We had a very good start, second out the heads behind Grant Wharington's *Wild Thing*, which he must have enjoyed. In the Yamba area, we were relatively close to *Ragamuffin* when the wind died. We were only in a drifter for about half an hour before we both got the breeze, and the door shut behind us, with the gap to the

other boats getting bigger as the wind died down the coast."

**Brett Young - "combat tactician"
Wild Thing (line honours)**

Line honours winner *Wild Thing* normally runs on consensus, with dinghy champion Brett Young taking up the "combat tactician" role for close-quarters racing. She was recently modified with new sails and two tonnes off the bulb. It was, says Young, "a quantum leap, and we're still learning about it. We finally had equal sails to *Brindabella*; we had new Quantum sails and a new masthead asymmetric; the old America's Cup sails were too big and too old."

"I was worried about carrying water ballast but I'm converted now, it's definitely the way to the future. You're enjoying sailing a lot more now, and it saves a fortune for the boat owner because there's less safety gear. We had a crew of 16 people instead of 24 or 25. It was a settled and multi-talented crew; everyone could do everything



Xena, halfway through a pre-Hobart refit, put on an encouraging performance for owner/skipper Sean Langman. She threatened the leaders on two occasions despite the fact that the light airs and beats weren't her favoured conditions.
(Pic - Ian Mainsbridge)

Typical Southport morning aboard *Ninety Seven*; breeze slanting off the land, flat water, clear dawn, and the morning sun starting to melt the ice off the crew. (Pic - Dal Harper)



although a lot of us don't admit to being able to do the bow because it gets too wet and cold up there! There were no hangers-on just there for weight, so we were kept busy, and instead of sitting on the rail we could actually hop down below to keep warm."

"We were just holding *Brindabella* off in waterline conditions, power reaching in the south-easterly on the first day, which we were pretty happy about because we thought that was where they could most probably get us. During the second day we eaked out 6 or 7 miles on *Brindabella*. At 4 am on the last morning, we were in thick sea fog when *Brindabella* loomed up beside us; we have no idea how they got there. So we were seven boatlengths apart 60 or 70 miles from home."

"We could run the course to the finish, but then it got lighter and lighter and we ended up having to gybe downwind. With two tonnes out of the boat, we could run lower than *Brindabella*. They gybed 15 or 16 times coming into the finish, but we were lower and just as fast."

**Bob Fraser- sailing master
Brindabella (second to finish,
third overall IMS)**

Bob Fraser says that the race had perfect conditions for the big boats to build their own apparent wind and move away from the smaller yachts; "We had a range of directions; 11 knots maximum from a range of directions; south-east at the start, west at night, clocking to the NE late in the days. We were building our apparent windspeed, close reaching at 10 knots in 7 to 8 knots of wind."

"In this year's race, we were only faster than *Wild Thing* when we were waterline reaching. The first afternoon, when we weren't fully pressured-

up, we were hauling them in, but when the pressure came in they could pump up and go. *Wild Thing* was always faster in eight knots and under; *Brindabella* feels quicker upwind in mid-range but we didn't have much of that in this race."

"We caught *Wild Thing* off Cook Island, and were only 300 yards apart on the last morning. Coming into the finish we were gybing downwind at about the same speed, but *Wild Thing* was sailing lower because they were three tons lighter."

**Sean Langman - owner/skipper
Open 60 Xena (third to finish)**

"It was a great race; a great test for the






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Southport 2000 was a race of flat water, light winds, and dry decks. Left and below: View from the deck of *Ninety Seven*. (Pic - Dal Harper)

boat. We've done a fairly extensive refit and we're about halfway there. Considering there was about 40% upwind, we are very, very happy that we got up to *Brindabella* twice; on the first afternoon and the first night."

Xena sailed with ten crew and used up to two of her three tonnes of water ballast. "When the afternoon sea breeze came in, we were a 60 footer against a 75 and we struggled, but we hung in there. We're really concentrating on getting the boat to go upwind, knowing that as soon as we turn around we are really quick; you pull away on the boat and it just takes off."

Peter Franki - owner Salt Shaker (winner IRC Div 2)

Salt Shaker, which won her division by over 80 minutes, spends most of the year as a charter boat with Eastsail. She is a "detuned" Sydney 36, about 500 kg heavier than a standard boat, 30 cm shorter in the rig and carrying a full cruising interior, wire rigging and a furler.

"We had a good crew on a well prepared boat, we know the boat and it's easy to sail" said Franki. "We had a great crew with lots of experience. Everyone did everything, but Ian Short and Greg Kay were the primaries. We made a minimum of unforced errors



and sailed a conservative race, using Roger Badham's weather kit and staying between the finishing line and the opposition."

Geoff Lucas- owner/skipper St Malo (winner PHS Div 2, third overall PHS)

"It was terrific; a very satisfying race, albeit long" said Geoff Lucas after his ten-week old Northshore 380 won her class in her first long race; "It was great to get a result first up; we were sailing

in the company of 12 and 12.2m boats." says Lucas. "I guess we did particularly well staying inshore at night; Kim Stone's navigation was particularly good."

Chris Thompson