

Col Metcher becomes New Qld Cobra Champion.

By Don Boldiston

The ever increasing costs of getting sailors to National Titles has made attracting strong fleets to State titles even harder. Qld has one advantage over the southern states in that the weather makes a regatta in April or early May possible. Thus the Qld Cobra Catamarans decided to hold their State Title on the last weekend in April at Southport Yacht Club adjacent to the Gold Coast. The decision of current Australian Champions Scott and Breck McVey to sell their title winning boat "Ronstan 1" to a Victorian at the completion of the titles meant he did not allow enough time to construct a new one so Scott borrowed an old boat from the eighties "Lightning", from Tony Wickings.

In addition to Scott's borrowed boat, two Cobra Association owned boats also contributed to the fleet. The old but solid "Double Trouble" was resurrected and leant to promising young sailors and sail makers Brendan Mann and Jesse Wales. The other association owned boat "Kiss my Asp", just purchased on Anzac day, was leant to a couple of enthusiastic mono sailors keen to try their hand on a Cobra; Helen Allardice and Jamie Lauerante. These efforts show how keen the long term members of the Cobra Class are in promoting the class and good racing. Sadly if you do not put in the work to get boats on the water all classes will suffer number losses in the current climate.

The first race saw many failures. Helen and Jamie on "Kiss My Asp" launched into their catamaran career with a capsize before the race, but quickly recovered to show an impressive start. Scott McVey experienced gear failure and retired during the race, and with Col Metcher and John Bucknell on "Cheetah 6" being unable to start due to a wedding, Glenn Dale and apprentice crew Eldon O'Reagan sailing "Spycatcher" cruised ahead to take a comfortable victory, with "Kiss my Asp" second, and Matthew Johnson and Nick Montague on "Shadow" third.

The second race saw all boats repaired and on the water, with a light north-easterly. "Spycatcher" took the initial lead, but "Cheetah" moved into first place at the bottom mark, after which local knowledge of the strong currents helped him to make a break on the field. After three triangles and three windward returns, no one could catch Col Metcher who took a well deserved victory. Glenn on "Spycatcher" threw away a comfortable second when he misread the finish line, picking the wrong buoy. By the time he realised his mistake and returned to cross the correct line. Scott on "Lightning" had relegated him to third. "Double Trouble" finished in fourth place, but "Kiss My Asp" and "Shadow" failed to finish within the 15 minute limit after the first boat.

Early afternoon found the wind fall dead calm in advance of an approaching storm. In light of the combination of nil wind, and the anticipation of a storm front reporting winds of 25 knots gusting to 33, the race committee cancelled the planned two later afternoon races.

Sunday morning saw the wind up and all keen to hit the water. Col Metcher put on another good start and moved to a comfortable lead. "Spycatcher" held a safe second for the entire course, but found a hole only a few hundred meters from the finish, and watched helplessly as "Lightning" powered past, moving from well below to well above

“Spycatcher’s” position. “Spycatcher” eventually crossed in third place, with “Double Trouble” fourth and “Shadow” fifth, and “Kiss My Asp” retired with gear failure.

The final race saw the breeze return and Scott on “Lightning” finally found his legs, Giving the thought of Lightning Strikes as he moved to a strong lead, followed by “Spycatcher” and “Cheetah”. By the end of the second set of triangles and windward returns, “Lightning” had lapped “Shadow” who failed to see Scott and hit “Lightning” a devastating blow in a port starboard collision. This event broke the port hull of “Lightning” in half plus other damage, destroying his chances for a race win, and giving the rescue team a lot of work to get them safely to shore. So “Lightning struck” was the result. In the confusion “Spycatcher” sailed an extra dogleg, allowing “Cheetah” to steal the race. “Spycatcher” managed to maintain a second, with “Double Trouble” third.

In a tight count of points the final results were:-

FIRST	“Cheetah 6”	Col Metcher	John Bucknell
SECOND	“Spycatcher”	Glenn Dale	Eldon O’Regan
THIRD	“Lightning”	Scott McVey	Breck McVey
FOURTH	“Double Trouble”	Brenan Mann	Jesse Wales
FIFTH	“Shadow”	Matthew Johnson	Nick Montague
SIXTH	“Kiss My Asp”	Helen Allardice	Jamie Lauerante

The weekend produced a lot of interesting racing and showed that Cobra catamarans do not have to be brand new to be victorious. Cheetah 6 won a title for Mark Adams over twenty years ago, and sporting nothing more than a new set of sails, proved it is still competitive with the National first and second place getters, Scott McVey and Glenn Dale.

Perhaps the most worrying thing for the Victorians is they may have acquired the National Champion boat, but they still have to have sailors good enough to beat this now stronger and enthusiastic group of Qld Cobra sailors. The decision of Darryl Schulte to return to the class added to Jon Bateman’s availability this year, together with the trio of Col Metcher, Glenn Dale and Scott McVey could see the Qld team take the first five places at the nationals at the end of the year.