

HARDY CUP 2009 – at Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron

News update – 5 February 2009

Evan Walker dominates Hardy Cup day three racing

Scoring five straight wins, defending champion Evan Walker dominated yesterday's third day of racing in the Hardy Cup ISAF Grade 3 under 25 Match-Racing Regatta on Sydney Harbour.

Sailing on his home waters in a fresh south-easterly to easterly sea breeze, Walker outsailed the opposition in the Pool A mini round-robin to head the fleet going into today's finals of the prestigious international event.

Conditions were ideal for aggressive and tactical match-racing in the Elliott 6 sports boats and the young teams attacked each other with great vigour, utilising the rules of racing to their limit.

In fact, the umpires were working virtually non-stop as protest flags fluttered and yellow or blue flags signalled infringements.

Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron race officers were busy, too, as the course areas for the Hardy Cup had to be shifted several times because of changes in wind direction and to keep the match-racing Elliott 6s well clear of the large fleet of yachts competing in regular Wednesday afternoon racing on the Harbour.

"We are combining well as a crew of four," Walker said this morning before his semi-final encounter with New Zealander Adrian Short. The team is the same that won the Hardy Cup last year: Walker, who will turn 22 next month, Kyle Langford (19) and Will Ryan (19), plus 13-year-old Adam Bloomfield..."he's really fired up!"

Walker, a graduate and now coach of the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia's Youth Sailing Academy, said his two toughest matches of the Hardy Cup so far had been against Nicky Souter, who is sailing for the Australian Sailing Development Squad. They had each had one win against the other.

"Yesterday, we were barely more than a boat length apart on the first windward and leeward legs, but we gained a vital penalty going through the gybes and as she had incurred a pre-start penalty, that gave us a clear advantage going to the finish."

Apart from the unbeaten performance of Walker, the other impressive effort yesterday was that of Souter, the Australian women's match-racing champion.

The highly skilled young woman sailor scored three wins out of five flights in the Pool A mini round-robin, including her second win of the regatta against the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron's Phil Robertson, last week's Warren Jones Regatta winner.

Souter and Robertson both ended the day with three wins each, but Souter's win over the Kiwis lifted her into second place in standings going into the finals.

Souter, 24, agreed that her match yesterday against Walker had been the toughest and best of the day, along with her second win against Robertson. "Those two penalties ended a really close encounter with Evan," she said this morning before heading out for a semi-final match against Robertson.

Souter's crew comprises Rayshele Martin (22), Kylie McKillop (22) and Lilly Taylor (19) all currently training with the Australian Sailing Development Squad as a potential crew for the women's match-racing at the London 2010 Olympic Games, with the Elliott 6 the chosen yacht.

Another New Zealander, Adrian Short, also representing the RNZYS, and David Chapman, from the RSYS, each had two wins yesterday to finish fourth and fifth overall at the end of the Pool A mini round-robin. Peter Nicholas from the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club, failed to win a flight.

Another Kiwi, Matthew Steven, from the Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club, topped Pool B to decide the seventh to 12th positions. He and his crew had four wins out of five flights, while Finnish woman Silja Lehtinen showed a vast improvement to also score four wins to place 8th overall behind Steven.

Tom Spithill from the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, had three wins to place 9th overall, followed by Lucinda Whitty (RSYS), Amanda Scrivenor (Australian Sailing Development Squad) and Yuki Nagahori from Japan's Hamaya Marina Yacht Club.

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