

## **HARDY CUP 2010 – Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron**

**News final – 11 February 2010**

### **Evan Walker wins Hardy Cup for second time**

Young Australian sailors have regained the prestigious Hardy Cup ISAF under 25 grade 3 match-racing title from the New Zealanders, with Evan Walker from the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia Youth Sailing Academy today winning a hard-fought final against Josh Junior from Wellington's Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club.

The final, sailed in a building 10-12-knot north-easterly seabreeze, went to four flights as the two young sailors and their crews used all their helming, sail-trimming and tactical match-racing skills in a bid to out-maneuvre each other in the Elliott 6 sports boats.

Walker is only the second skipper to have won the Hardy Cup more than once, an event conceived by eminent Australian yachtsman Sir James Hardy to promote match-racing skills, who has watching the regatta this week. The success of his concept can be judged by the ongoing international success of Adam Minoprio (NZL), three-time winner Michael Dunstan (AUS), Laurie Jury (NZL) and Mark Campbell-Jones (GBR).

Many of the competitors in this year's Hardy Cup can be expected to go further in match-racing and other yachting pursuits – Evan Walker tomorrow will be skippering an 18-footer in the JJ Giltanan international regatta on Sydney Harbour; Josh Junior will soon return to campaigning a single-handed Laser for the London 2012 Olympics.

Walker won the Hardy Cup for the first time in 2008 and finished a rather luckless third last year. Despite some losses in the round-robins this week, he remained at the top of the leader-board throughout the regatta, eliminating Jordon Reece from the host club, the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, 2-0 in their semi-final and then winning the best-of-five final against Junior 4-1.

Junior won his best-of-three semi-final against fellow Kiwi and defending Hardy Cup champion, Adrian Short from the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron in Auckland, 2-0.

"We seemed to be coming from behind in each of the final flights today, overtaking Josh on the downwind legs by picking the better wind shifts," Walker said after the final.

"Josh was sailing really well, upwind he was faster but we managed in all but the second race to overtake him downwind. In the first race, we looked out of the running but I think we 'spooked' into gybing away; then, when he came back we did the same thing; we made up four or five boat lengths on final third of the last run to the finish," recalled Walker, who crossed the finish line just two seconds ahead.

Walker lost flight two after incurring a pre-start penalty for tacking across Junior's bow and trying to take the exonerating turns nearing the finish. "It didn't work and we lost out," Walker added, with Junior then winning by 1 minute 36 seconds.

Walker and his crew of Carl Langford (tactics/mainsail and bow) and Ted Hackney (jib and spinnaker trim) again came from astern to win flight 3 by 18 seconds after the New Zealander broke his tiller extension. The fourth and deciding flight again saw Junior faster upwind but losing downwind, with a penalty adding to their woes, losing the flight by 14 seconds and the Hardy Cup 3-1.

Sailing in his second Hardy Hardy (fifth in 2008) Josh Junior sailed a most impressive series with his crew of Chris Jones and Tim Coltman, all from Wellington. "We were in control at the starts and upwind, but kept losing on the downwind spinnaker runs," Junior said. "Downwind, Evan kept rolling us...his tactics were better."

Junior has one more youth match racing regatta, the National Bank under 21 regatta in Auckland, before returning to his campaign in the single-handed Laser. Currently No 2 in New Zealand, he has sights set on the London Olympics in 2012.

In today's petite final to decide third and fourth placings overall, Adrian Short (NZL) scored two straight wins over Jordan Reece (AUS), generally sailing 'faster and smarter', as one spectator commented.

Earlier in the day, Walker won two hard-fought flights against Reece, the first by a mere 1 second, the second by 28 seconds after a spectacular tacking duel on the second beat to windward, to win their semi-final.

In the Short versus Junior semi-final, the first encounter saw the two Kiwi sailors twice split tacks, contrary to copybook match-racing tactics, with the Junior's winning margin just 9 seconds. In the second flights, Junior won the start and sailed faster and higher, picking the wind shifts well for a convincing 18 second victory.

From Peter Campbell

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