

HARDY CUP 2011 – at the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron News update – final – 10 February 2011 / 1600hrs

William Tiller steers Kiwis to Hardy Cup victory

Three 21-year-old sailors from Auckland's Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron today outsailed their Australian opposition to regain the prestigious Hardy Cup ISAF 3, under 25 match racing event on Sydney Harbour.

Over the past four years, young Australian crews have won the Hardy Cup twice, and now New Zealanders have notched up their second victory over the same period.

William Tiller, Harry Thurston and Shaun Mason started the final day with a 2-1 semi-final win against the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron's Jordan Reece and then went on to defeat the defending champion Evan Walker in three straight matches in the final.

Over the four day regatta, Tiller and his crew, who sail for Full Metal Jacket Racing, lost only three match races in two round-robins and the semi-final.

The performance of Tiller and his crew epitomises the quality of match racing helming, tactics and crew work that constantly emerges from New Zealand in the wake of the nation's ongoing involvement in the America's Cup.

Graduates of the RNZYS youth training scheme, they have been match racing together and against each other for the past three years. Tiller has twice won the Governor's Cup in California, while Thurston sailed with another New Zealander, Adrian Short, when he won the Hardy Cup in 2009.

While Tiller and Thurston are Kiwis born and bred, Mason began his sailing in Mirror dinghies at Portsmouth, England, before his family moved to New Zealand.

Now fulltime sailors, the trio are heading for another match racing regatta in Wellington and in March will spend a month in California, contesting the Ficker Cup and then, hopefully, the prestigious Congressional Cup. All this leads towards the international circuit of match racing at a senior level.

Today's Hardy Cup racing, off Point Piper in a shifty 8-12 knots nor'easter, saw boatspeed, tactics and use of the racing rules play significant roles in the outcome of most races.

In the William Tiller versus Jordan Reece semi-final, the New Zealand crew led Reece throughout the first match to win by a comfortable 17 seconds. However, the second saw tacking duels and luffing encounters saw Tiller penalised over the inside overlap rule. Reece broke through to win by 8 seconds but the Australia could not sustain the pressure, losing race three by 10 seconds and the semi-final 2-1.

Two past Hardy Cup winners faced each other in the second semi-final but Australian Evan Walker proved superior to New Zealander Adrian Short in boatspeed and tactics, winning 2-0. However, the Kiwis were not happy with the umpire's interpretation of the racing rules over a 'buoy room' incident that effectively gave them two penalties in race two. Unable to clear the penalties they were declared DNF in the second match.

The Australia versus New Zealand final proved somewhat of an anti-climax, with William Tiller beating Evan Walker 3-0, winning by 22 seconds in the first match, 20 seconds in the second and by a close 6 seconds in the third and deciding match.

Tiller used superior boatspeed to completely outsail Walker in the first match of the final, and in the second the New Zealand crew's rig setting proved superior in the fresher breeze. Nor did a penalty on the first windward leg help the Australians.

Walker tried his best tactical manoeuvres in the third match but was still outsailed by Tiller, going down 3-0.

"We sailed a lot better as the regatta progressed and everything fell into place for us," Tiller said after today's final. "It was our first win in six months, so we are delighted with the result and hopefully we can maintain that form in Wellington and then in Los Angeles."

Harry Thurston was equally excited by their victor, joining Tiller in praising the organisation and running of the regatta by the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron. "This is my third Hardy Cup and we won two years ago when I was sailing with Adrian Short," he said.

"We enjoyed sailing the Elliott 6's but picking the wind shifts was the hardest thing today," Thurston added. Bowman Shaun Mason agreed. "We had a lot of gybing and tacking throughout the regatta, especially today, but our team work got better as the regatta continued," Mason said.

In the petit final to decide third and fourth placings overall, Adrian Short added to New Zealand's good day by defeating Jordan Reece 2-0.

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