

## **SailGP Inspire Racing report**

During March 16-19, Cate and Hunter represented the Waimakariri Sailing Club in the SailGP Inspire Racing programme.

They were sailing in a RS Feva, a two-handed dinghy that has been designed for youth sailors. The RS Feva is an exciting boat to sail, requiring a lot of teamwork, and can achieve some exhilarating speeds when all three sails (mainsail, jib and gennaker) are deployed at once.

There were a total of 33 RS Fevas in the fleet. Nine of the crews were part of the SailGP Inspire Racing Programme, with an U16 mixed crew nominated by each of the local sailing clubs. The other 24 crews were experienced RS Feva sailors, who had travelled from Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin to take part in the regatta (tough competition!).

The first day of the programme was dedicated to introductions and a practice session. This practice session was pretty vital for the kids from the local sailing clubs as most of them had never sailed a RS Feva before. After some rigging tips from Simon Cooke (current RS Feva World Champion), the fleet took to the water and practiced for three hours, in close proximity to several F50s.

Fleet racing was scheduled to begin on the Friday, but a NW forecast resulted in the F50s cancelling their practice session and the RS Feva racing being postponed. To fill in the morning the RS Feva sailors headed to Velocity Blokarts in Bexley, where a lot of fun was had. By midday it was evident that the NW wasn't as bad as predicted so everyone charged back to Lyttelton, rigged and took to the water. The first hour of sailing was a challenging one as some big gusts came through, but midway through the racing the NW died out and a new challenge began with light shifty winds taking over. Two races were completed in total on the Friday.

Saturday and Sunday brought much calmer conditions. The RS Feva racing was scheduled to take place between 10am and 1pm each day so that racing was over before the F50s took to the race course. However, on both days the easterly was late out of bed and the sailors spent plenty of time bobbing around on Lyttelton Harbour waiting for the breeze to fill in. Fortunately the easterly did eventually arrive and 3 races were completed on Saturday, followed by a further four on the Sunday.

Over the course of the week Cate and Hunter did extremely well getting to grips with a new boat and the intensity of fleet racing. Despite being in a very competitive fleet they never finished last in a race, and their boat handling improved greatly during the regatta.

Cate's highlights from the week were getting to meet the junior sailors from the other local sailing clubs and sailing alongside the F50s.

Hunter's highlight of the week was meeting all the pro sailors in the Sail GP village on their tech tour. He met Blair Tuke, Liv McKay, Russell Coutts, and Phil Robertson. Hunter enjoyed meeting the other junior sailors from Canterbury and is hoping to catch up with them around the local clubs when out sailing.

Cate and Hunter would like to thank:

- the Waimakariri Sailing Club for giving them this opportunity.
- Sam, Cadence and Cameron for supporting them in the RIB.
- their sensational support crew (Sarah, Alan, Murray and Heather) for taxi, catering and cheerleading services.



Photo 1: The RS Feva fleet practising alongside Amokura



Photo 2: a busy start line for the RS Feva fleet



Photo 3: Cate and Hunter hiking in the Norwest



Photo 4: Cate and Hunter head downwind (black gennaker)





Photo 5: Fleet racing near the F50 race course



Photo 6: Cate and Hunter (foreground) sail by the Grandstand on Sunday



Photo 7: The Inspire Racing team from local sailing clubs