

2024 Starling National Regatta – WSC report

The 2024 PICTURE Starling Association National Regatta was held in Whakaraupo – Lyttelton Harbour in Canterbury over Waitangi Day public holiday weekend with 4 days of racing preceded by a measurement day and hosted by Charteris Bay Yacht Club. Waimakariri Sailing Club (WSC) had 6 sailors entered: 2 in Development Fleet, 2 in Open Fleet and 2 in Over 19yrs Open Fleet. For all of us it was our first Starling National competition with over 80 boats registered for the event.

On Thursday 1 February we transported our boats to Charteris Bay Yacht Club and set up camp at Orton Bradley Park in Charteris Bay. The camp caretaker was also on the Regatta Committee, so we were able to park our boat trailers in a paddock at the park. New to us was having to tether our boats to the yacht club deck so they didn't blow away in case of high winds at night!



DAY 1 Southerly course racing inside Charteris Bay.

Friday 2 February was measuring day and we turned up at 8.30am to line up and get our boats weighed, spars and foils measured, as well as ourselves weighed to ensure our lifejackets were the correct buoyancy. We each received a free regatta Tee too. At 15mins to measure each boat x80 it was an all-day affair to ensure no cheaters! For those not in the measuring line YNZ Youth Coach gold medal winner at Sydney 2000 Olympics Jenny Armstrong supported by Geoff Woolley and Greta, ILCA 6 Women's Olympic campaigner held a race theory training talk followed by on the water race start practice. Afterwards there was a post sailing debrief and yachting pathways talk. We all got a chance to hold Jennys Olympic gold medal, which was surprisingly heavy. Previous winners of the Starling National Trophy include sailing alumni such as Russel Coutts.



Open Fleet rounding the top mark in Lyttelton Harbour.



888 Ethan Lord - Development Fleet pre-start.

DAY 1 RACING

On Saturday 3 February we arrived at 8.30am again to rig up and fuel up with bacon butties. The race start time of 11am was delayed for an anticipated southerly wind change which filled in at 1pm rising to over 20 knots. The southerly course was set inside Charteris Bay with the first race being a simple Olympic triangle. Open Fleet started first with 75 boats on the start line followed by Development Fleet with 8 boats. Our WSC sailing

team found the windy conditions hard on our boats throughout the regatta. In Open Fleet during Race 1 Brent Andrews – 884 ‘Sudden Surge’ broke a chainplate on the first beat and with the whole rig in the water had to retire. Belinda Andrews – 220 ‘Yonah’ completed Race 1 then came ashore as the wind continued to build. Harry Parker – 1112 ‘Childs Play’ completed Race 1 and then had to retire with gear failure. Sam Foster – 1176 ‘Perplex’ completed 2 Races before retiring from Race 3 with a knock on the side of the face from the boom. Development Fleet had 2 Races: Hunter Imrie – 1296 ‘No Name’ who had only just purchased his Starling two weeks prior to the Nationals sailed a terrific 2nd place in Race 1 before retiring from Race 2 with a broken tiller. Ethan Lord – 888 ‘Kermit’ sailed 2 solid races in the strong conditions. We all enjoyed a free burger (or two!) for dinner courtesy of the Starling Class Association. That evening was very busy with boat repairs and rig adjustments for all WSC sailors. We were grateful for the services of ‘Oldsy’ an Old Salt sailor who slept at the rigging area and took on the role of boat repair serviceman – he was kept busy almost all night on several nights of the regatta, one of which he managed to repair a fully holed hull in time for the next day’s race.



1112 Harry Parker (at right) - avoiding a capsized boat. 1112 Harry Parker - beating upwind. 888 Ethan Lord – hiking action.

DAY 2 RACING

On Sunday 4 February weather conditions turned easterly but very breezy at 18-22 knots. This time we were in Lyttelton Harbour proper near Quail Island. The Zephyr National Regatta being sailing off Diamond Harbour was happening at the same time. It was wonderful to see both NZ designed, Des Townsend yachts sailing a major regatta in the same harbour - one by youth and the other by senior sailors. Open Fleet got off to a good start in Race 1, Brent in 884, late to the start after last minute final repairs from the previous day decided to retire early and competed in Race 2. Belinda in 220 sailed a solid Race 1 but struggled with the sea state; chop and waves from all directions together with wash from 80 yachts and 8+ rescue support boats so decided to go ashore. Sam in 1176 broke a batten in Race 1 so went ashore to repair it which took him out of Race 2, he then sailed a solid 50th place in Race 3. Harry in 1112 had a great day sailing all 3 races consistently in the low 60’s. However, during one race he got pushed onto the leeward mark (buoy room not given?) and the on the water YNZ judge made him do a 360 penalty turn straight away which caused him to capsize. Said YNZ judge later apologized saying that he didn’t intend for him to lose so many places! Development Fleet sailed 2 Races with a solid 4th place in both races for Hunter in 1296 and Ethan in 888 right behind him in 5th place. At the end of the day we all enjoyed a gratis Spanish Paella dish dinner provided courtesy of the regatta sponsors.



884 Brent Andrews – windward beat.

Pre-race bacon butties with Jeff O’Leary.

220 Belinda Andrews – windward beat.

DAY 3 RACING

Monday 5 February dawned a sparkling Canterbury easterly day with the wind filling in at 10am for a 10.30am Race 1 start. The Race Officer set 4 Races to be sailed for the day due to the weather forecast for Day 4 racing being light winds. Traditionally after two days of racing Open Fleet is split into Gold and Silver Fleets with the leading half of the regatta in Gold Fleet. With just over 80 boats total we all ended up racing together on the same course with Development Fleet starting 5mins after Open Fleet. This gave us great experience in navigating an Olympic type course with the 'traffic' of many boats on the water and on the same course. Tacking decisions were more about giving way than actual wind shifts at times! Getting clear air and keeping out of trouble was a mission in the strong windy conditions.

In Open Fleet WSC sailors enjoyed a good Race 1 with the sea state settling down to the usual harbour waves plus chop, with white caps progressing as the wind built from 10 knots at the start of Race 1 to a challenging 29knots by 3pm during Race 4! Sam in 1176 sailed consistently placing in the 40's for all races, surfing past Belinda in 220 in Race 2 on the broad reach leg. In Race 3 he performed an excellent tack around (granny gybe) amongst the capsized carnage at the wing mark in 25-28 knots. Belinda in 220 sailed her best result of the regatta at 54th in Race 2 before going ashore as the wind built to over 25 knots. Brent in 884 sailed a good Race 2 before retiring again with rudder issues. Harry in 1112 sailed consistently but found it increasingly difficult to tack in such strong conditions. He came ashore during Race 3 with a rescue boat crewman sailing his boat in for him. Development Fleet sailed 3 Races with both Ethan in 888 and Hunter in 1296 completing all 3 Races. Development Fleet was then sent ashore as the wind continued to build to 29 knots.

More boat maintenance was needed after the third day of very windy conditions; however apres sail, all sailors enjoyed a free woodfired pizza provided for dinner. Once all the fleets and sailors were ashore and fed, a spot prize evening was held with regatta volunteers, Race Committee, sailors and parents all receiving a prize gift courtesy of the regatta's sponsors. A fabulous end to the day.



1176 Sam Foster – demonstrating excellent hiking technique upwind.



1296 Hunter Imrie – beating to windward.

DAY 4 RACING

On Tuesday Waitangi Day, as predicted the easterly sea breeze was light and late in arriving and the weather warm. The lead Starlings were tied for first place so the Race Officer waited until 1pm when the wind was 8-12 knots to send us all back out onto the harbour. The morning was spent checking rigging (ours and the 'competition'), chatting and getting to know each other from all over the country. Our boats were parked next to a group from Royal Akarana Yacht Club in Auckland with their French coach! This was an important last race which had 2 postponed starts due to a last-minute wind shift, 1 general recall and a black flag recall before the race commenced at last at 2.55pm (start time limit for the day was 3pm). In Open Fleet Belinda in 220 and Brent in 884 spent over an hour on the water sailing with the 3 false starts, then decided to call it a day as the over 50's team was getting very tired! Harry in 1112 sailed a good mid 60's result and Sam in 1176 an even 40th placing for their final race of the regatta. Ethan in 888 and Hunter in 1296 enjoyed their last race of the regatta in Development Fleet.



Charteris Bay Yacht club rigging area – over 80 Starlings!



Belinda Andrews – winner Over 19 years Des Townsend Trophy.

FINAL RESULTS

- Hunter Imrie in 1296 finished 4th overall in Development Fleet, an excellent result in a boat less than 2 weeks familiar.
- Ethan Lord in 888 is to be congratulated as the only WSC sailor who sailed all the races of the regatta finishing 5th place overall in Development Fleet.
- Sam Foster in 1176 sailed WSC's best result at 56th which is amazing as he is still under 12yrs, and this is his first year in a Starling.
- Harry Parker in 1112 finished the regatta in 70th place – not indicative of his mid 60's form due to having to retire from some races resulting in a few DNF's.
- Belinda Andrews in 220 with the oldest WSC boat sailed a 71st place with Brent Andrews in 884 in 75th place. The strong windy conditions certainly challenged the over 50's team!

Congratulations to Belinda Andrews on winning the Des Townsend Trophy for Over 19yrs Starling sailor in 2024. This being all our WSC sailors first Starling National Regatta we learned A LOT, and going forward it will improve our sailing and regatta race technique in leaps and bounds!

Our THANKS to:

Shane Foster and Brian Lord on WSC Waimak2 support rescue boat

Jeff O'Leary; WSC high performance sailing coach

WSC parents and grandparents [shore crew] with support for boat repairs and encouragement

CBYC and the NZ Starling Class Association; PICTURE organic clothing (main sponsor) for running an excellent event – we think we easily ate through our entry fee with the wonderful hospitality alone!



Spot Prize night – Hunter, seated at far right got a PICTURE cap.



Thanks CBYC for an amazing 2024 PICTURE Starling National Regatta.