

INAUGURAL AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL

# WETA CHAMPIONSHIPS

Image Ross Gray.



| story **PETER HACKETT** | images **JULIE HARTWIG**

Well we did it.

It was all looking shaky with the year that was, but the hardworking duo of event organiser Hamish Urquhart and association president Todd McVey managed to get a slightly trimmed but wonderful national event completed during December 28, 2020 to January 2, 2021. Well done fellas!

**W**ith border and Covid issues emerging right up to the preceding weeks, things were looking pretty grim, especially for our NSW and Victorian mates who had nominated and paid the dollars for accommodation at Lake Cootharaba for the event. So when we all got together for a state reps zoom meeting in mid December, it was bitter sweet but reassuring that the guys who could not legally get to the event were the ones who actually argued that we continue to run the series and still call it a true national

championships. That is just the nature of the cool people that have joined the Weta tribe.

So when the 21 boats assembled on the white sand beach of Boreen Point for the invitation race, we kept in our thoughts the crews of the six boats that nearly made it, and we have pledged our support for the second nationals at the end of this year at Port Kembla Sailing Club. As physical recognition of this twist of fate, these sailors are mentioned on the back of the new perpetual nationals trophy, artistically crafted by our

member from Kurnell, Keith Chidzey. Mention should also be made of the NSW sailors that managed to get across the border and especially of Tony Fist who made the journey from Tassie!

The sailing could be summarised at the nationals by one word. *Close*. The most common discussion point from sailors who generally had never raced together was the realisation that the one design aspect of the Weta class is what makes them so much fun to race, and the racing is always close. You only had to stuff a tack up and three boats would sneak through. Pick the right downwind direction with the puffs shifting across the lake and you could pick up five places. It was just always that close.

Courses cleverly selected by PRO Chris Morey each day ranged from varying lap/gated windward leewards, to traditional triangle/windward return/triangle. The variety seemed to keep everyone happy although some of the more portly amongst us seemed to like passing the underfed sailors on the blasting tight reaches of the triangles.

Andres Gabarrin pushing hard downwind.





**TOP:** Typical cluster of gennakers halfway through a race.

**ABOVE L-R:** A swarm of Wetas descend on the lake; Junior Champ Jackson Weber; Bell Henebery and some of the boats visiting the Kinaba Ranger Station.

If there was another word it was *Fun*. Sailors were always smiling, there was not the hint of a protest. There may have been a bump or two on the start line but a chat and a handshake (I mean elbow tap) would resolve that quickly. The post race discussions were all about sharing learnings (perhaps because this is such a new class with so many new members). And the nicest thing was absolutely no discussions about ratings or handicaps but just about the sailing!

In the bigger one-up fleet, the eyes were always going to be on the younger or lighter fellas. So when the medium breezes arrived for the first heats, Noosa speed sailor Andres Gabarrin lit up the course with three bullets, surprising multiple state champ Glenn Foley from Bundaberg. Glenn is a 125 national champ

and was clearly rattled when he missed a finish gate and scored an uncharacteristic DSQ in the second heat. Recent Weta convert and multiple national multihull champion George Owen of *Mad Max* fame got his nose in the mix in those early races too, leaving the rest of us to pick up a well shared bunch of points and fight for the sub-podium glory. As the breezes freshened and clocked more to the south-east but retained their shiftiness, Glenn got his mojo sorted and came back to win every heat from heat five onwards by often small margins including heat eight by two seconds and heat 10 by three seconds, both to Andres to seal the result. *Close*. My perception from near the front of the fleet was that Andres may have been sometimes sailing a little faster but Glenn seemed to have his tiller in synch with the windshifts more often. So Glenn narrowly won by two points from Andres, with George further down in third.

Glenn's son Mitchell took a while to settle in the series but finished strongly to win the performance handicap championship. Maybe calling the boat *Wild Child* is tempting fate? Our other Bundaberg legend David Vockler rejoined the fleet after a break in his bigger Pulse trimaran, and was model of determination in all the conditions to finish eighth overall and runner up in Master Mariner to Hamish Urquhart because of his nautical maturity. Winning lady was Jada Boden, just entering the fleet with mum Jo.



It was good to see families and other combinations in the two up fleet and interesting to compare the times which were often no more than five minutes behind the other fleet. Rod Daley from Bundaberg won every heat counted to get the gold with local lightweight Sabot sailor Jackson Weber hiking in the puffs and receiving a resounding applause for winning the Youth championship. Rod had enough speed around the course to seriously challenge many of the one-up

The winner of one up on the way to the finish line.

sailors. Second was Lake Samsonvale's Tim Guymer and Karen Boulter. A national titles story like this would usually focus on any special gear needed, but you just really *needed a Weta*.

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ABOVE LEFT: Rod Daley and Jackson Weber winning the 2-up.

Many of us have self tacking jib kits for pure convenience now but Andres did not and he is still going blisteringly fast. There is a wide range of age in the boats and the newer foam boats should be faster on paper, but older boats did very well. Most have the later square top mainsail, but the pinheads were going fine. The only other change in the class lately has been the addition of some lovely new colours and Nathan Stanton likes his new orange gennaker as much as I



The young fellas duelling upwind in a typical close race.

love my new low-profile pink kite, but the jury is still out as to which colour is faster!

For the important social aspects, we were fortunate to have the popular Lake Cootharaba Sailing Club bar open every day after sailing, with an awesome lake and sand dune outlook that left visitors promising to return each day. As well as that we had a couple of excellent evenings (and NYE yeehah!) at the popular Apollonian Hotel. The final presentation night was great also with a pig on a spit the focus of attention till it was consumed.

Considering the way 2020 was panning out, we have to consider ourselves extremely fortunate to get the event to the water so successfully. Interestingly, any of the dinghy classes that have made it this far during the year have reported growth in numbers, and the Weta is no exception. For the last six months the used boat market has been smashed, and again when I looked this week

there were no used boats available in this country and only one new one. We have all seen this happen before when a big series is happening, but I think the Weta swarm is buzzing.

And the final word on what a cool class and series this was became obvious on the day AFTER the series. Usually after a big championship series the competitors pack up and rush off back to their own paddock and try not to rethink that bad tack, shocking start, or damaged bit of gear. On the day after this one, a bunch of us ended up on that beautiful white sand beach again and started rigging the boats instead of packing up. *Fun*. All the boats I saw were two-up with wives and friends, and a few of us sailed all the way across the lake to investigate the headwaters of the Cooloola Everglades and pull up at the Kinaba Ranger Station before heading home in a blasting ride with a freshening northerly.

It does not get any better than that.

**Results – One Up (Scratch) (Provisional as of 1500 on January 2, 2021) OVERALL**  
Sailed 10, Discards 3, To count 7, Entries 16, Scoring System Appendix A

Boat Name	Sail#	Club	Helm	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	Total	Nett
1 Not Yet	1185	BSC	Glenn Foley	(2.0)	(17.0)	(3.0)	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	30.0	8.0
2 TBA	1289	LCSC	Andres Gabarin	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	(5.0)	(3.0)	(4.0)	2.0	2.0	2.0	22.0	10.0
3 Wetasashag	1287	LCSC	George Owen	(6.0)	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	(5.0)	(5.0)	4.0	5.0	36.0	20.0
4 Wet As!	1184	QCYC	Peter Hackett	3.0	(6.0)	4.0	(5.0)	3.0	4.0	2.0	(6.0)	3.0	4.0	40.0	23.0
5 Superstition	1182	LCSC	Hamsh Urquhart	5.0	3.0	5.0	(9.0)	(11.0)	5.0	(7.0)	4.0	6.0	7.0	62.0	35.0
6 Wild Child	709	BSC	Mitchell Foley	(10.0)	(17.0)	(10.0)	7.0	4.0	8.0	3.0	7.0	10.0	3.0	79.0	42.0
7 Weta Magic	1131	LCSC	Doug Chetwynd	7.0	7.0	6.0	(10.0)	(9.0)	6.0	6.0	3.0	(9.0)	8.0	71.0	44.0
8 Hard Decision	1235	BSC	Dave Vockler	(8.0)	(8.0)	8.0	(13.0)	6.0	7.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	6.0	80.0	51.0
9 White Knight	107	BRSC	Nathan Stanton	9.0	9.0	(11.0)	4.0	7.0	9.0	(10.0)	9.0	5.0	(10.0)	83.0	52.0
10 The Other Office	1270	LCSC	Todd McVey	4.0	4.0	7.0	(12.0)	(12.0)	10.0	(12.0)	10.0	12.0	12.0	95.0	59.0
11 The Cat	1221	DSC	Tony Fist	(12.0)	10.0	9.0	6.0	8.0	11.0	(15.0)	(13.0)	7.0	9.0	100.0	60.0
12 Teal Spirit	1269	LCSC	Bill Henebery	11.0	5.0	(12.0)	11.0	(13.0)	12.0	9.0	11.0	11.0	(13.0)	108.0	70.0
13 One and a Half	819	BRSC	Bob Eggins	(15.0)	13.0	(15.0)	8.0	10.0	(15.0)	13.0	12.0	14.0	15.0	130.0	85.0
14 Willy Tippet	453	BSC	Bill Koorneef	(14.0)	11.0	14.0	14.0	(15.0)	14.0	11.0	(15.0)	13.0	11.0	132.0	88.0
15 Minx	844	BSC	Gordon Myers	13.0	12.0	13.0	(15.0)	14.0	13.0	14.0	14.0	(17.0)	(17.0)	142.0	93.0
16 Splash	763	BSC	Angela Gregory	(16.0)	14.0	(16.0)	(16.0)	16.0	16.0	16.0	16.0	15.0	14.0	155.0	107.0

**Results – Two Up (Scratch) (Provisional as of 1500 on January 2, 2021) OVERALL**  
Sailed 10, Discards 3, To count 7, Entries 5, Scoring System Appendix A

Boat Name	Sail#	Club	Helm	Crew	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	Total	Nett
1 Wet and Slippery	1237	BSC	Rod Daley	Jackson Weber	(1.0)	(1.0)	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	(6.0 DNC)	15.0	7.0
2 Sandpiper	1267	LSWSA	Tim Guymmer	Karen Boulter	2.0	(4.0)	(4.0)	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	(3.0)	2.0	25.0	14.0
3 Sub Zero	175	BVSC	Philip Bennett	Catrina Bennett	(3.0)	2.0	(3.0)	(3.0)	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	26.0	17.0
4 Not As Sirius	842	NHTYA	Brian Harrison	Valerie Harrison	(4.0)	3.0	2.0	4.0	(5.0)	4.0	4.0	4.0	(5.0)	4.0	39.0	25.0
5 Begin Again	845	CYC	Jo Boden	Jada Boden	(6.0)	(6.0)	5.0	5.0	4.0	(6.0)	6.0	6.0	4.0	3.0	51.0	33.0
					RET	DNS					DNF	DNC	DNC			

**Results – One Up (Handicap) (Provisional as of 1500 on January 2, 2021) OVERALL**  
Sailed 10, Discards 3, To Count 7, Rating System NHC1, Entries 13, Scoring System Appendix A

Boat Name	Sail#	Club	Helm	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	Total	Nett
1 Wild Child	709	BSC	Mitchell Foley	4.0	(14.0)	(5.0)	3.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	(11.0)	1.0	43.0	13.0
2 Hard Decision	1235	BSC	Dave Vockler	3.0	3.0	(7.0)	(9.0)	3.0	2.0	6.0	4.0	(7.0)	2.0	46.0	23.0
3 White Knight	107	BRSC	Nathan Stanton	2.0	4.5	(9.0)	2.0	4.0	5.0	(10.0)	5.0	1.0	(9.0)	51.5	23.5
4 Willy Tippet	453	BSC	Bill Koorneef	5.0	4.5	(8.0)	4.0	(10.5)	6.5	3.0	(9.0)	3.0	3.0	56.5	29.0
5 Wet As!	1184	QCYC	Peter Hackett	(10.0)	(10.0)	4.0	(13.0)	6.0	6.5	2.0	7.0	4.0	5.0	67.5	34.5
6 Weta Magic	1131	LCSC	Doug Chetwynd	9.0	7.0	1.0	(11.0)	(12.0)	3.0	4.0	1.0	(12.0)	11.0	71.0	36.0
7 Superstition	1182	LCSC	Hamish Urquhart	7.0	6.0	3.0	(12.0)	(13.0)	4.0	7.0	3.0	(9.0)	7.0	71.0	37.0
8 The Other Office	1270	LCSC	Todd McVey	1.0	2.0	2.0	10.0	(10.5)	9.0	(12.0)	(13.0)	8.0	8.0	75.5	40.0
9 The Cat	1221	DSC	Tony Fist	(11.0)	9.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	(11.0)	(13.0)	11.0	2.0	6.0	79.0	44.0
10 One and a Half	819	BRSC	Bob Eggins	8.0	(11.0)	(11.0)	1.0	2.0	(12.0)	8.5	6.0	10.0	10.0	79.5	45.4
11 Teal Spirit	1269	LCSC	Bill Henebery	6.0	1.0	(12.0)	8.0	9.0	(13.0)	5.0	(12.0)	6.0	12.0	84.0	47.0
12 Splash	763	BSC	Angela Gregory	(13.0)	(12.0)	(13.0)	7.0	7.0	8.0	8.5	8.0	5.0	4.0	84.5	47.5
13 Minx	844	BSC	Gordon Myers	(12.0)	8.0	10.0	6.0	8.0	10.0	11.0	10.0	(14.0)	(14.0)	103.0	63.0
												DNC	DNC		