

2010 True South Etchells Victorian State Championships

By Cameron Arthur

Jake Gunther and his crew of Tony McPhail and Stuart Skeggs sailing "The Boat" have taken out the 2010 Victorian Etchells Championships. Sailed off Brighton in very testing conditions. They outsailed a very impressive field of seasoned Etchells campaigners. With the top boats at this years national champs lining up for a rematch this was always going to be a serious stoush between Bertrand, Graham Taylor/ Grant Warrington and Damien King.

Racing got underway on day one in a slowly building westerly starting in 8 to 10 knots. The fleet split early with most thinking that the right was the way but as things unfolded the smart money crossed into the left and those that stayed right were struggling to get any decent air to get back on. The Breeze was gradually freshening but didn't really get up till the run to the finish. At the last top mark Jake Gunther rounded first with Graham Taylor in hot pursuit. Third round was Geelong sailor Brendan Garner who opted to gybe late and as a result came blasting trough on a hot angle with awesome pace to win the first heat. "We got up planning and just didn't stop, we were able to move from wave set to wave set with the boat screaming along. Fantastic Etchells conditions" said Garner after an exciting opening heat win to the regatta.

Race 2 was held on the Sunday after a wait for breeze in a light westerly with Damien King and co leading at every mark. Ross Lloyd in "The Nurse" held onto a solid second and once again Geelong sailor Garner was in "the chocolates" with a third place.

The breeze was steadily building as the third race got underway with most crews opting to change up to their flatter headsails with the anticipation of stronger air on the way. At the first mark Garner led with two times world champion John Savage second and Jake Gunther a close third. "We slipped down inside John on that run and after a very polite discussion about the wind thru the centre we all decided to gybe into a stronger vane of air and as a result we rounded the bottom mark equal first with Garner. It was a very cool moment of intelligent, considered tactical fleet sailing" Jake Gunther said. "That is what makes this fleet so good to be apart of, it sets it apart from so many other classes because of the incredible depth."



Saturday Night was very memorable with the sponsors "True South" putting on food and delicious boutique beers at their new Brewery in Black Rock. It was a well attended regatta function and was a great opportunity for lots of scuttle butt and generally catching up with the interstate crews and old mates. Monday proved to be a tough day for PRO Ross Wilson as after starting the fleet in 15 knots a cell moved over and decimated the fleet with a 40 knot blast. It was amazing to watch Gunther and Taylor match racing Etchells for the regatta win in 35 plus knots, unbelievable seamanship. As the fleet neared the top, wind speeds were up to nearly 40 knots so it was obvious that the only option was to abandon and wait ashore for the weather to clear and have another go at getting things underway. At 3.30 the AP came down and the fleet left the harbour only to get pounded by another 30 knot cell. PRO Ross Wilson made the difficult call and decided that due to the untenable weather, racing was not possible and the regatta was over.

Jake Gunther who is a world Governor and Australian Vice president of the Etchells class said when receiving the trophy at presentation "Tony and Stuart and I have been working hard on our Etchells sailing generally and still feel we have a long way to go with our preparation towards Sydney in 2012. We have only had the last season as a team so it is great to be getting good results so early. The next hit out will be Mooloolaba, We can't wait!"

The Etchells Class would like to thank Sponsors True South Brewing Co, the Royal Brighton Yacht Club, PRO Ross Wilson and all the volunteers for all their assistance with running this event.