

ETCHELLS WORLDS
2018
BRISBANE - OCTOBER

TOP 12 COMPETITORS SURVEY

EQUIPMENT USED AND COMMENTS ON
AREAS THAT AFFECTED PERFORMANCE

Conducted and compiled by Andrew Palfrey
November 2018

Etchells Worlds 2018 - Brisbane

Introduction:

The Worlds this year felt like an epic event, which I guess is fitting for the 50th year of the class.

Our team travelled down to Australia from various parts of the globe, to take part in a 94-boat event that was superbly planned, communicated and executed by the Brisbane Etchells Fleet and the Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron.

I sailed with Peter Duncan in Oatmeal - USA 926 (Hull 1453) together with Sasha Ryan and Victor Diaz de Leon. We placed 12th in what was a very challenging regatta. The breeze was generally between 8 and 12 knots (nice). However, it rarely settled in terms of direction and velocity. It was also quite patchy. We generally sailed in tidal current of more than a knot and on some days we were racing thru a transitional tide. The competition was fierce - the performance of the boats (in those conditions) was very closely matched. Many teams had invested a lot of time training and competing at the venue over the previous years and months in a long series of well-run events.

Starting was quite a challenge. On top of the start line length (1200 metres - three-quarters of a mile!) and 93 other boats, we also had to factor in the current. More often than not, the current was pushing the fleet over the start line (ebbing in a northerly breeze). Coupled with the current was the threat of instant disqualification for EVERY start if you were over early. So, plenty going on and real test of your collective team skills.

It was so enjoyable and satisfying. I was sad when the series inevitably had to end. I loved seeing how strong this Etchells class is in Australia and how it still attracts the best sailors of the past 50 years. Racing with and catching up with so many old friends was wonderful. But it was an intense couple of weeks.

We came away mildly disappointed with our result, but a scan through the results illustrated how deep the fleet was and also how far down the list some very good teams placed. I guess we felt we let some decent positions slip through our fingers (but it can always be worse!!).

After any event, we all reflect and consider all sorts of things and try to figure out what the key ingredients were for the winners, and what areas mostly impacted our results through the event (good, bad or indifferent). For me, these initial thoughts were not totally clear. So, I started speaking to other competitors to get their feel for the equipment they chose to use and other factors they felt was important for the 2018 Worlds. After chatting with half a dozen or so people, I thought it would be a better idea to survey the top teams and share the results with the wider Etchells class.

The output follows here. I was very encouraged by every respondent's willingness to share information with the wider fleet. This embodies the spirit of the Etchells. Give, and get back.... Thanks very much to each of you.

I also added a footnote to each competitor, giving my impression of them as a competitor. I hope you find the information as compelling as I have and that it helps you and your team-mates going forward.

In closing, I'd like to make mention of the winning team, led by Martin Hill. This team winning the 2018 Worlds was, I believe, great for the Etchells class. Martin is a relative newcomer to the class. I can take some credit for introducing him to it. He was looking for something to race, in order to accompany his Farr40 campaigning in late 2014. After a few races in his newly acquired AUS 925 with the Sydney fleet on the harbour, he was hooked and Etchells racing became his focus. Martin has developed his skills and built his team into the tight unit we witnessed in Brisbane. Bravo Martin, Julian, Sean and Matt!

Good sailing,

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ETCHELLS WORLDS 2018 - TOP 12 - EQUIPMENT USED

Etchells Equipment Choices - Survey of Top 12 Teams (in the fleet of 94 boats) - survey conducted and compiled by Andrew Palfrey - Nov. 2018

Etchells Worlds - Brisbane - October 2018

| Result | Skipper | Fleet | Boat | | | Mast | | | Sails | | | | |
|--------|------------------|---|--|-----------|------|--|------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| | | | Hull | Builder | Year | Builder | Year | Spreader config | Mainsail | Jib-Light | Jib-Heavy | Spin-Light | Spin-Heavy |
| 1st | Martin Hill | Sydney | 1449 | Heritage | 2017 | Smidmore* | 2017 | siwinging | **PC+ | MW5 | BR5 (used one race) | AUS VMG | AUS FR (used 80% of the time) |
| 2nd | Mark Thornburrow | Hong Kong | 1448 | Heritage | 2017 | Selden | 2017 | fixed | PC+ | LM2L | MHR (used 30% of the the time) | AUS VMG | AUS FR (used 20% of the time) |
| 3rd | Matthew Chew | Brisbane | 864* | Pamcraft* | 1992 | ** | ** | fixed | *PC+ | LM2L | GM6.5 | Custom | FR-SL60 |
| 4th | John Bertrand | Melbourne | 1440** | Heritage | 2016 | Whale | 2017 | swinging | PC+ | MW5 | BR5 (not used) | AUS VMG (aged) | AUS FR (used most of the time) |
| 5th | Chris Hampton | Melbourne | 1443 | Smidmore | 2016 | Whale | 2017 | swinging | *PCF | LM2L | LM2H modified | AUS VMG | AUS FR |
| 6th | Steve Benjamin | US East | 1427 | Ontario | 2016 | Proctor | circa 2001 | fixed | *PC-FM3 | LM2L | LM2H-RH (used 50% of the time) | USA VMG | USA FR (used 50% the time) |
| 7th | Jay Cross | US East | 1464 | Ontario | 2018 | Smidmore* | 2016 | swinging | *PC-FM | LM2L | LM2H-RH (used one leg) | USA VMG | USA FR (not used) |
| 8th | Jud Smith | US East | 1377 | Ontario | 2007 | Whale | 2018 | swinging | *AP-2 | LMR | MHR (used 40%) | VMG | Custom Runner (used 20%) |
| 9th | Lawrie Smith | UK | 1434 | Heritage | 2016 | Selden | 2017 | fixed | PC-FM | LM2L | LM2H-RH | AUS VMG | AUS FR |
| 10th | William Voerman | Brisbane | 1383** | Ontario | 2008 | ***Whale | 2018 | swinging | PC+ | LM2L | LM2H-RH | AUS VMG | AUS FR |
| 11th | Peter Merrington | Sydney | 1332 | Heritage | 2006 | ***Smidmore | 2018 | swinging | PC-A | LM2L | LM2H-RH (used one race) | AUS VMG | AUS FR (used one race) |
| 12th | Peter Duncan | US East | 1453 | Ontario | 2017 | Whale | 2017 | swinging | *AP-2 | LMR | MHR (used 30%) | VMG | Custom Runner (used 30%) |
| | | | Boat notes | | | Mast Notes | | | Sail Notes | | | | |
| | | | 1) *864 was the only "grand-fathered" boat in the top-12, regarding relaxed tolerances on keel dimensions and weight. Ring frame fitted in bow. 2) **Three former World Championship winning boats featured in the top-12, being 1440 (John Bertrand 2016) 1427 (Steve Benjamin last year) and 1383 (also John Bertrand in 2011). | | | 1) *Martin Hill's and Jay Cross's masts were retro fitted with Whale spreader assembly 2) **Matthew Chew's mast's origin is not known - suffice to say it is an old mast 3) Most boats with swinging-spreader configuration also carried some degree of aft-rake in the spreaders for upwind setting 4) William Voerman and Peter Merrington's masts were brand new. Forced replacements after damage to rigs in the windy pre-worlds regatta | | | Blue background denotes North sails | | | | |
| | | Yellow Background denotes Doyle sails | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | * Mainsails noted with an asterix have modifications from the standard. Most are luff-curve alterations | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ** Martin Hill's mainsail was a small fine-tune on luff curve | | | | | | | | | | | |

ETCHELLS WORLDS 2018 - TOP 12 - COMMENTS ON PERFORMANCE

Etchells Performance Factor comments - Survey of Top 12 Teams (in the fleet of 94 boats) - survey conducted and edited by Andrew Palfrey - Nov. 2018

Etchells Worlds - Brisbane - October 2018

| Result | Skipper | Comments |
|--------|----------------------|---|
| 1st | Martin Hill | Our crew chemistry including Michael (Blackburn) as coach – to analyse everything and keep our cool – observe and improve Departmentalise the jobs and trust in each other – Julian Plante: rig, mainsail trim and mode upwind – Sean O'Rourke: Jib trim and mode downwind – Matt Belcher dedicated to tactics and strategy – MH shut up and steer – Michael -tide and weather Starting strategy – maximise your leverage – if no favoured end with wind or tide, chose the starboard end - Matt had an ability to see this without instruments or bearing Accelerating at the start – we could hold a lane - we had a great high-mode Mat's ability to read the shifts and marry that to Michaels tide info – (or more to the point when the tide is a critical factor and when not) |
| | ...and Julian Plante | We rolled the dice a little, with late selection of sail inventory and team (hence the pre-worlds was really a sail-test, a chance to gel the team and our race planning). We made it work with a team based on trust, respect, with very honest and objective debriefs that were used each day to keep identifying areas of weakness or potential to improve, and then carrying that through. Nothing revolutionary with this approach, but fortunately we got it right, moved in the right directions and kept getting better every day. Rig wise, we had some good tuning guide numbers, calibrated for our boat and developed through the year I then adapted to the new sails and daily conditions using a few key indicators, firstly rig look & leeward cap tension, then headstay sag, main stripes, etc. We felt pretty comfortable and confident hitting our setup for most races. We felt we could match anyone for speed and sometimes had a little edge when needed to exploit mostly great starts and course placement <i>(AP note: having been a part of Martin's campaigns for several years, I have experienced first-hand how Martin gets the best from people and creates a positive high-performance environment. It is no surprise it all came together for this team at the right time)</i> |
| 2nd | Mark Thornburrow | Great Team. Good Boat and sails, gave us reasonable boat speed. <i>(AP note: Mark and his teams have been fast over several years. Mark recruited Matt Belcher's 470 team-mate, Will Ryan. The skill of both Matt and Will in managing the strategy and changing plan etc was very impressive. Highly developed racing instincts!)</i> |
| 3rd | Matthew Chew | Experience. Patience, Confidence <i>(AP note: Matt and his team were the top placed local fleet boat. In our opinion, these guys had the best grip on the current. 864 was a team that we kept a close eye on. You'd question yourself if you were heading the opposite way)</i> |
| 4th | John Bertrand | Speed was good in all races upwind and downwind. Mast /main / jib combination all worked in sync. Our starts generally very strong. <i>(AP note: The master sailing with a very strong team. At 72, JB just keeps sailing at an incredibly high level. Like Martin Hill, he's skilled at assembling the right people and creating an enjoyable atmosphere - on and off the boat - for high performance)</i> |
| 5th | Chris Hampton | We decided on the sails and rig we were going to use a good six months prior to the regatta. We were very confident of the settings and trim through the range, after a lot of testing and development. The team of Chris, Charlie, myself and coach Matt Howard work very well together and have a very positive attitude on and off the water. We also have very clear-cut rolls on the boat with small overlaps, thus allowing each of us to own our position. We are very good Mates. We went into the regatta feeling like we were fully prepared. There was no "she'll be right" (the poms have worked out that expression is Aussie slang for "it's gonna be a cock up") with boat prep, logistics, lead-in sailing, sail and rig testing <i>(AP note: Despite coming to Etchells with relatively little experience in racing, Chris has methodically skilled himself up to be a great helmsman. He has also assembled a great team of people. Probably the most consistent AUS team over the past couple of years).</i> |
| 6th | Steve Benjamin | Teamwork. Accurate tuning. Consistent boatspeed upwind and down. Fast upwind but not particularly high pointing. Fast downwind but high. Coaching (Morgan) and support (Dave). <i>(AP note: Team Benj had a rough start to the event. Credit to them, that they collected themselves and scored lowest in the last half of the event. It is huge for the class that a legend like Benj chooses to spend his time racing with us.)</i> |
| 7th | Jay Cross | Conservative starts near the middle to avoid any BFD possibility and then bailed as soon as possible to duck 10+ boats to get out. Worked most times as we would get to top 20 by first mark. We played the backstay and ram more aggressively this regatta to affect headstay and main draft. <i>(AP note: Jay and his team were contenders for the championship with two races to go. They displayed a remarkable ability to come from behind with speed and strategy)</i> |
| 8th | Jud Smith | Speed good with MHRADIAL (med/hvy) jib on long tabs. Our MHL (light) Jib was a little old but went well in lighter races. We liked our new Whale mast. Didn't see big speed differences in top of fleet. Starting well and getting to favored side was the biggest factor in most races. Sides mattered downwind as well but not as significant as upwind sides. We got caught on wrong side of beat in two consecutive races when wind out of SE. We were not familiar enough with the race course and the current / wind plays that influenced most legs. Better knowledge of which way would pay off would have influenced where to start. <i>(AP note: Another sailing legend. To spend time with Jud is the equivalent of sailing university. Crew Mark Johnson and Andrew Smith created a wonderful environment off the water in Brisbane. We, as their training partners, were beneficiaries. Great people)</i> |
| 9th | Lawrie Smith | Our speed was good probably because we were familiar with sails, as they are what we normally use. <i>(AP note: The class is the richer for Lawrie's participation in the Etchells. His team were the dominant UK team all season in Cowes. They had their ups and downs in Brisbane, but if we were next to them on the race track, it was a challenge to stay there).</i> |
| 10th | William Voerman | We stayed true to our tuning guide that we developed over the last two years, making small changes but essential always reverting back to our basic settings when in doubt. Team responsibilities. We had faith and trusted in each other's jobs and functions. Never did we give up, even after the worst start or a bad manoeuvre. Fight back and gain every inch you can no matter what place you in. <i>(AP note: This team did not go away! Very solid in all areas. I did not have the pleasure of spending time with Will and his team, but this boat holds a special place for me, having won the worlds on her in 2010 with JB and Slingers)</i> |
| 11th | Peter Merrington | We had Good boat speed in moderate air upwind and very good speed downwind. We used stock sails, all new for the event but the same model we have been using for the past 2 years. We have developed our rig settings based very closely on the North tuning guide but fine tuned to our feel and experiences over many hours sailing. Downwind we have worked hard on close communication spin trimmer and helm and give full responsibility to the 3rd man on downwind strategy working hard to stay in clear lanes. We modified up our crossover number between VMG and running chute during the regatta to at least 12 knots where before it was more like 10 knots. <i>(AP note: "Billy" and his team have been very consistent campaigners. They clearly won day 3 in Brisbane, in very challenging conditions)</i> |
| 12th | Peter Duncan | We developed consistent speed upwind via Peter's skill on the helm, experience and instinct, good set up, accurate observations, coaching support (thanks Tony Rey) and an enjoyable tuning partner relationship with Jud, Mark and Spot Generally we had starts that we could build upon - but I pushed too hard in the last race, resulting in a BFD and dropping out of the Top 10 (luckily this list extends to Top 12....). Found the marrying up of the light and shifty breeze and the current strategy to be an interesting and challenging puzzle - upwind and down. Mixed results there.... |