

Gill Two-Islands Race anything but boring!

With a miserable week leading up to it and the forecast looking tough the starters in this inaugural SSAA race from Sydney harbour to Bird Island off the Central coast, then to Flinders in Wollongong Harbour and back was anything but boring. A fast blast North in 20 to 25 knots provided exhilarating sailing with Rod Skellett's Pogo 40 "Krakatoa II" enjoying the conditions to lead to Bird Island followed with a close tussle between Mark Griffith's Bull 9000 "Raging Bull" just being pipped by Lee Condell's Mount Gay 30 "Lik Lik" closely followed by Tim Montague-Jones Swarbrick 40 "Wideload". The turning point marked the start of what promised to be a long and hard work for 90 miles to Wollongong with the forecast for the breeze to back into the East in the early hours. However this didn't happen as heavy showers brought wind from all directions and several flat calms throughout the night and following day.

As expected "Krakatoa" was also first around Flinders, but not by much more than 20 minutes from "Wideload" closely followed by "Raging Bull" and "Lik Lik" a further 20 minutes behind them. What was expected to be a broad reach for home lasted no more than 30 minutes before the breeze starting doing circles as the sea breeze battled out with showers coming out of the North West. "Krakatoa" stepped out while the next three fought it all the way to the finish changing places several times along the shore between Botany and home. In fact just at South Head 500 metres from the finish there was a sudden change from 15 knot North-easterly to a light Westerly which resulted in "Raging Bull" winning the tussle and finished 8 and a half minutes in front of "Lik Lik" followed by "Wideload" nearly 20 minutes later.

Mark Griffith's "Raging Bull" ably crewed by Mel Clark easily won on handicap from "Lik Lik" who had elected to sail 3-up and take a 7.5% penalty. They were a much deserved winner in what was a very demanding race. "Wideload" took 3rd on handicap.

It should be noted that this is the 3rd SSAA event won by Mark which is an incredible achievement and a testament to his ability, enthusiasm for short-handed sailing, and skill. Congratulations and sincere thanks to our sponsors "Gill" for their continued support and to Eric Frank and Peter McCorquodale on board "Debonair" for acting as relay vessel, and "First Light" for starting vessel.

Lee Condell