

freestyle nationals

NEW ZEALAND 2010

The first New Zealand Freestyle Nationals were held in Auckland from Oct. 1. - Oct 3. 2010. The forecast, even a couple of days ahead, showed a promising SW flow without any rain on the weather maps and two days with 16-20 knots SW, bingo!

The registration and first skippers meeting was set for 9.00am at Bayswater across the harbour bridge. The low entry numbers were a bit disappointing to start with but not much of a surprise as events usually take a few years to get a proper following. Freestyle is still a bit under the radar in New Zealand, so we are hoping this event will change this for good.



There was not much wind to start with so the competitors had plenty of time to “indulge” in the entry bags (thanks to **Rodgers Dental**) but also rig and tune their gear. The funnelling effect of the SW across the bridge started to work by around 11.00 am so the comp “box” was set, 3 markers and the boat acting as the judging platform at the same time.

Random “one on one” heats were chosen for the first round and after the first couple of heats the winners and the losers had to compete against each other. The plan was to run as many heats as possible to give the competitors plenty of time to show their skills. The wind was more on the light side but overall sailable on 100l boards and 5.3 sails.



All the way from Wellington came Tom Taylor, certainly one of the contenders for the National title and ready to impress the judges. Local hotshot Thomas Davies was also keen to add another title to his list and showing everyone that he deserved winning the Auckland Freestyle Champs a couple of month earlier.

The first round saw an outstanding performance by all competitors, with some explosive moves in the gusty conditions.

But the top three, Tom, Thomas and Pete Smith impressed the most with an array of moves including spinloops, grubbies, flakas, spock 540, a couple of one handed and even switch variations and great transition moves like upwind 360's and some nice Geckos.

After a quick break with a bbq on the beach to recharge the final heats were run and after a full round completed the ranking at the end of the first day was:

1. Thomas Davies
2. Tom Taylor
3. Pete Smith
4. Lawrence Carey
5. Bruce Sellar
6. Jill Cooper

Day 2 saw similar conditions to the first day but to mix things up a bit we decided to change the location over to Pt Chevalier. The format was changed also to a double elimination so that the losers had the chance to work themselves through the rounds back up again. The heat duration was also reduced to get through more heats and put some more pressure on the sailors.



Thomas sailed solid again with some really smooth flakas and grubbies and a couple of excellent performed one handed spocks which moved him on to the final without any lost heats. Tom also had some great big moves including a nice spinloop again which scored high in those light conditions. With a few more crashes he lost his first heat against Thomas which meant he had to go through the losers round to get back to where he wanted to be, the final.

Again, a quick bbq was a well deserved lunch break in between the heats and by the time the last sausage was gone the wind picked up a notch and made for a bit more consistent sailing conditions.

Pete didn't sail as well as on his first day which saw Lawrence, the young gun, taking a position in front of Pete today. Nice old school moves by Lawrence, including body drags and upwind 360's but also some solid air jibes and lots of Spock attempts impressed the judges on the boat.

After Tom Taylor won all his heats through the double elimination he ended up in another final against Thomas. Both were pretty exhausted so we decided to run the losers final first. Bruce and Jill had to fight it out and Jill managed to win this heat to mix the ranking up to day one.

Time for the final! The closest heat of the whole comp evolved right in front of the judging boat with both Thomas and Tom giving it all. They topped each other with a great variety of moves but also some great crashes. It was a very close call, but in the end one more super clean clew first Spock by Thomas was enough to secure the win over Tom.

The day ended with a party and prize giving at Pt Chev sailing club. Great food, some cold ones and spotprizes went down well with the crowd but everyone seemed too exhausted from the two day event to party hard.

The final results are:

- 1 Thomas Davies
- 2 Tom Taylor
- 3 Pete Smith
- 4 Lawrence Carey
- 5 Bruce Sellar
- 6 Jill Cooper

A big thank you to the sponsors: Gaastra, Tabou, Rodger Dental Studio, Naish, C3, Carbon Art, WSP, Boardstore NZ, and Bayswater wind sport and the volunteers for their time and help with boat, judging and activities on the shore.