

## **ILCA 2023 Nationals - Coaches Notes**

### **Day 1**

15-18kn race 1. NE wind with a left favoured course and left biased line. Essentially a speed track with good starts essential to get to the correct side of the course. Downwind staying clear and on the correct gybe was important.

12-15kn race 2. NE Left favoured again. You had to be on left end of line and hold a lane. Tacking off on first beat meant you dropped back. Important to pick the time to go back right. Strong tide at top mark meant approach was important.

The chop was short and very steep at times over a longer wavelength swell. It was important to keep maximum power in rig to drive through it and not to stay in high mode going into the chop otherwise it would stop you pronto.

Fleets had a mix of general recalls so the black flag made it's first appearance (particularly in the ILCA 7 fleet).

### **Day 2**

Rain squalls with pressure up and down. SE - S 10-15 but as low as 5kn. Patchy breeze with pressure lines related to traversing rain and cloud lines. Important to go toward the advancing rain bands as these brought pressure and a related shift so you needed to prioritise getting into these early. The pressure dropped off behind the rain and being positioned for the next line of cloud and wind was essential.

### **Day 3-4**

Near gale force winds and driving rain associated with a ridge along the NSW coast and an offshore low resulted in all racing being cancelled for these days. Three races were subsequently scheduled for days 5 and 6 to make up for some of this lost time.

### **Day 5**

The SSE gradient winds persisted on day 5 albeit moderated somewhat and ended up slightly below forecast maximums. Racing was held in 15-20 knots from the SSE which moved through the day to SE as the rain cleared and a thermal influence built slightly. The course was back into the eastern side of the race area close to shore and the airport. Seas were choppy similar to day 1 but with a more confused state due to reflected wave pattern off the surrounding shore areas and small incoming swell through the heads. Tide as going out all day and pushing competitors back off the line at the start but stronger from right to left at the top mark. All three races (Races 5-7) required good gear changes with sufficient power in the rig to drive through the chop whilst hiking hard. Hiking strength, weight and fitness all came into play here. Although the wind was from the SSE-SE all day, the left paid as on days 1 and 2 with more pressure evident down the left side of the course. The gradual lift shift during the day added to this left side dominance. By the end of Race 7 for the ILCA 6 silver fleet (the last race of the day) the breeze had gone left so far that the last beat to the top mark was essentially a one tack procession on port.

### **Day 6**

The final day of racing was held under clear sky with winds forecast to be 10-15kn from the SSE-SE similar in direction to Day 5. We predicted a building thermal influence over the day and indeed this eventuated with winds moving through the racing from 175-180 to 155 by the end of the day. Although slightly stronger than forecast at first, the breeze moderated slightly to be within the range prediction. The left side of the course was again favoured throughout the day although it was observed that some boats that went right and banged the starboard layline did pick up some tidal gains and do well out of it. This was a high risk option however. Racing started early with the tide essentially high but gradually increasing in influence as racing progressed with the right to left flow building. Again the sea state was choppy but reduced slightly from Day 5 making steering and

gear selection easier. A slight symmetry in chop vs wind direction meant that gear changes from tack to tack were important. By the end of the days racing winds had moderated to around 10kn.

### **Main learning points.**

1. In line with what all the locals and sailors familiar with Botany Bay advised, the area is a strongly left side favoured venue. Although the racing was fair, it did mean that getting to the left in clear air and in a good lane was essential. In turn, good starts and a lane off the line to set this up was required putting starting technique at the fore.
2. Mode changing and associated well executed changes in rig tune were also key. Due to the asymmetric wave vs wind direction at times, knowing how to set up your rig and changes in how to steer through the chop was a required skill. Trying to point too high into the chop would kill your speed and cause you to lose ground against surrounding boats. Also body position in the boat was important. Some ILCA 4 sailors initially had trouble with burying their bows in the sharp chop upwind but after getting their weight back in the boat their upwind performance improved.
3. Being on the line, at full speed, on the gun in clear air and with a lane to work with was essential as getting to the left was important. In the ILCA 6 and 7 fleet the starts were impressive with the whole fleet within mm of the line at the gun. In the ILCA 4 fleet a significant line sag was evident at times (up to 4 boat lengths) so some of the younger sailors have some work to do here in establishing transits and getting their nose forward.
4. Downwind in the stronger winds of day 1 and 2 was all about risk management and not pushing too hard. A number of sailors had swims downwind either due to steering errors or burying the bow into the short chop. Large angle changes were required to both catch the waves and to avoid going bow into the sharp chop in front. The top end of the ILCA 6 fleet were doing large angle changes to accomplish this. Also active and measured fore and aft weight transfer was essential. In talking to some of the top end sailors in the gold fleet they found that a bit more centreboard than normal helped to allow for drive through the turns plus added stability.

### **Future work programme**

1. Boat speed - some of our squad were lacking straight line speed against their peers. More work on this is required both in rig set up, steering response and balance.
2. Conditional awareness - getting heads out of boat and looking around to see what is happening is important to build on. Particularly on day 2 seeing where the pressure was coming from and when was important to predict.
3. Start lines - our ILCA 4 sailors in particular need more work on line awareness. They also need to work more in being more pro-active in line positioning.
4. Downwind steering - better steering downwind needs to be built on especially how to build apparent and gain speed to catch waves and when to turn in time with waves. Fore and aft body position needs some work.