



2005 South Island Firebug Championships

This year Queen Charlotte Yacht Club in Picton was host club, and we shared the contest with championships for Lasers, Toppers, plus the QCYC club champs. We had a small fleet of Firebugs this year, Picton was too far away for the Dunedin boats, and only 6 from Christchurch went.

The contest was wide open with the absence of two time winner Thomas Caley from Dunedin, last years winner Benny Butcher, and this seasons Canterbury Champion James Kennedy. It was an agonising decision for Nicky and James Kennedy to miss the contest but they had a family wedding in Auckland the same weekend. Benny had decided not to defend as he was in hot contention for the local club champs in his Starling.

The entrants were, Max and Kate Rutherford, Michael Power, Michael Collett, Justin Dowell and Tom Arthur, from ChCh, and Arthur Coutts and Ian Butcher from Picton.

Justin, Arthur, Ian and Tom were seniors, so there was an even split of young and old, with Justin sort of straddling the fence but mostly on the oldies side.

Viv Butcher was OOD, and daughter Olive was taking entries, so it was an all Butcher affair. At the briefing Viv passed on messages of best wishes for the contest from Peter Tait, Ray and Nola O'Brien which we thought was a nice touch.



Queen Charlotte Yacht Club Picton

To get out to the course area we had to sail for about 35 minutes out of Picton harbour past Mabel Island into Queen Charlotte Sound, fortunately with the puffy Southerly it was all downwind.

We had three back to back races scheduled that day, the wind for races 1 & 2 was shifty, with puffs and lulls ranging from 13 knots to 1 knot, and gradually easing throughout the day.

The sea state made it difficult for Firebugs with our square bows, the gusts kept a continual chop on the water, and in the lulls wasn't there enough drive to get through it.

The lulls and shifty conditions would spread the fleet out, then compress it all together again, this was the pattern of the day resulting in some close finishes.

It was quite interesting for us Cantabrians, to be sailing out in what seemed to be the open ocean, we were alongside the shipping lanes, and all day Interisland ferries, cruise launches and pleasure craft were going past, along with their attendant wakes.



Racing in the shipping lane!

Between races there were some quite long waits until the various classes had all finished, and it was amusing to see the tactics the Toppers used to wait it out. There were ten of them, mostly from Dunedin, they would carefully capsize the boats until completely inverted, all the while taking care to keep themselves and their lunches dry, then they would sit or stretch out on the bottom of the hull eating lunch or what looked like having a snooze. The advantages I could see was that the sails weren't flapping for half an hour, but mainly that the rig acted like a big sea anchor and they simply didn't drift at all. Opposed to this when you are ready to race, all the telltales are stuck to the sail.

After the days sailing it was a long beat back to the club, Picton looked so tiny in the distance, it must have taken us at least 45 mins, and having left Picton about 10am and arriving back about 4.30pm. it was along day for us folks used to having the racecourse right off the slipway.

But that is nothing compared to what happens overseas. I was talking to a well known Chch sailor, Neville England, who was doing the 470 circuit in his youth, once when sailing in a regatta on one of Canadas' big lakes, they had to sail by compass for 3 hours under spinnaker to the course, by then the land was out of sight. After competing, it was back by reverse compass heading, plus there were no patrol boats shepherding them, it was every man for himself.



Kate Rutherford from PPYC



Michael Collett (162) and Tom tussle for the lead

Day two started off with a delay until the wind filled in, then it was the long beat out to the race course again. The wind was light, steady and from a Northerly quarter, the sea was calm, they are conditions Firebugs love and the fleet kept fairly close for both races, the only ones to suffer were Max, who was the youngest and smallest, and was under orders to sail reefed until he had served his apprenticeship, and Justin who is a big strapping fellow weighing about 85 kg. Nevertheless Justin was hanging in there fairly well on the beats but was losing out on the offwind legs. Unfortunately for Justin all this seasons regattas have been in light conditions.

Michael Collett came through as the most consistent junior, and overall second place getter, pushing the eventual winner, Tom, hard. Ian was always a threat with good boat speed and never playing follow the leader, he was difficult fellow to cover. Tom ended up having to cover these two if ever he got in the lead otherwise it was too risky to let them off the hook.

Many Thanks to QCYC for a most enjoyable and well organised weekend.



Justin Dowell



Prize winners:

Standing from left to right.

Tom Arthur, Michael Collett, Michael Power, Justin Dowell, Ian Butcher.

Sitting: Max Rutherford, Kate Rutherford,



Arthur Coutts - Pirate Captain for the weekend

Results:

Tom Arthur	(1)	1	1	1	1
M Collett	3	(4)	2	2	2
Ian Butcher	2	2	3	(4)	3
A Coutts	(5)	5	4	5	4
Kate R'ford	4	6	5	(7)	6
M Power	7	7	(10)	3	5
J Dowell	6	3	(7)	6	7
Max R'ford	8	(11)	6	8	8

Regatta Writeup by Tom Arthur 3.05