

20th Skate Nationals Report
Modern Boating May 1977 Edition

THE 20th Skate Championships at Chelsea Y.C. were notable for two reasons — four races were cancelled, abandoned or postponed, due to heavy weather, and Victorians dominated the series, winning the first six of the seven heats.

The winners were brothers Kim (skipper) and Bill Clarke of Chelsea Y.C., sailing Ratcatcher, a three seasons old fibreglass boat equipped with rotating mast, parachute spinnaker and twin eight foot hiking planks.

Ratcatcher won three heats in light to moderate winds, while defending champions John Manfield and crew Peter Bainbridge on El Borran won the three heats in winds above 20 mph.

Also from Chelsea, El Borran dropped from contention for the title by performing poorly in lighter airs and by being disqualified for premature starting in Heat five. El Borran finished fourth, behind 1974/5 champion, Traction (Ray Simpson, St. George), and Impact (Howard Coy, Yarra Bay).

The top Victorian boats all had rotating rigs, loose foot mainsails, and double luff or parachute spinnakers.

20th Skate Nationals Report
Modern Boating May 1977 Edition

Victorian boats have now won three of the last four Australian Championships.

The Junior Australian Champion is Richard Longbottom of Yarra Bay. With his crew, Colin Menzies, he sailed a borrowed, leaking Skate as their own was wrecked a week before the championships. They were forced to repair the borrowed boat throughout the series, and despite it taking many gallons of water in the heavy races, they finished every race.

A scratch race and Heat 1 were blown out.

The resailed Heat 1 was in a 25 mph westerly, direct on shore.

El Borran started about 12th, four minutes late, but worked their way through the fleet to hit the front on the last windward leg, winning by 25 seconds from Impact with Alke (Keith Sinton, St. George) a further half minute behind.

Heat 2, that afternoon, showed how changeable Port Phillip Bay can be. The start was delayed through lack of wind, and, in lumpy seas left over from the morning, started an hour late in a five mph south-westerly. The Clarkes, showing their skill in the fickle breeze, sailed Ratcatcher to a four minute win after taking the lead on the second lap.

20th Skate Nationals Report

Modern Boating May 1977 Edition

Heat three was sailed in the best conditions of the series — a 15 mph south-easterly with flat water. Again Ratcatcher was successful, working past Crimson Dynamo (Alan Ardron, Speers Point) and then IMpact, by skilful use of windshifts to win from Crimson Dynamo

Heat four was to start in a northerly wind which strengthened to 30 mph and more as the start gun fired. After one lap, with only four boats upright and the wind above 40 mph, the race was abandoned.

The resailed Heat four in a 20-25 mph south-westerly with a rough sea running. Eleven boats retired or did not start. El Borran led from start to finish, although only 45 seconds ahead of Traction

Resailed Heat five on the morning of January 3 was in a 10-15 mph south-westerly with slight sea. Ratcatcher led throughout, winning by two minutes from Alke with Impact third.

The wind had strengthened to 20 mph for the afternoon's sixth Heat, with the sea rising. El Borran then atoned for the morning by winning narrowly from Cheapskate and Impact, which led up to the windward mark on the last lap.

Going into Heat seven only El Borran could beat the Clarkes, but with a 5-10 mph south-easterly there was little hope.

Finally Ray Simpson broke the ice for NSW by winning the seventh Heat by 20 seconds from Ratcatcher with Mojo a further 25 seconds behind. Impact was fourth, while El Borran after working from 16th to seventh at the start of the third lap, slipped to finish 13th.

20th Skate Nationals Report
Modern Boating May 1977 Edition

Skate results: 1. Ratcatcher (Kim & Bill Clarke, Chelsea, Vic), 4,1,1,10,1,8,2; 25 points. 2. Traction (R. Simpson, St. George, NSW) 14,3,3,2,10,10,1; 46.4. 3. Impact (H. Coy, Yarra Bay, NSW) 1,12,4,14,3,3,4; 48.4. 4. El Borran (J. Mansfield, Chelsea, Vic) 1,15,8,1,DISQ,1,13; 54. 5. Alke (K. Sinton, NSW) 59.7. 6. Cheapskate (J. Vockler, Vic). 63.7. 7. Whoosh (J. Stone, NSW) 65.4. 8. Crimson Dynamo (A. Ardron, NSW) 65.7. 9. Spectrum (R. Holm, NSW) 82.7. 10. Shakedown (S. Longhurst, NSW) 92. ●