

2021 Victorian Open Masters and Youth Championships

The Victorian Open Masters and Youth Championships were sailed over the weekend of 27th and 28th February at Sorrento Sailing and Couta Boat Club at the southern end of Port Phillip.

The light and at times variable winds proved challenging for the strong fleet of 78 boats, sailed by skippers across the age range from 13 to 75 years plus. This was particularly so for the second race on the Sunday afternoon, when the wind swung and faded, such that even with a shortened course, only the Laser Standards and half of the Radial fleet finished within the time limit.

The Radial fleet of 48 boats had close racing throughout the fleet with general recalls leading to U flag or Black flag starts for each of their races. The overall winner and Radial State Champion was Casey Imeneo from McCrae Yacht Club who had a close tussle across the weekend with runnerup Simon Merritt also from McCrae. Casey showed the benefit of several months training with the Australian Sailing Squad in 2020 and in early 2021. She left their training hub in Sydney on Thursday, sailed the Regatta, and was returning to Sydney on Monday.

In the Radial Masters categories Owen McMahon a previous State and National Masters division winner sailed another good series to win the Masters division (45 to 54 yo) and 6th Radial overall, and John Jagger 7th overall to take out the Grand Master division (55 to 64yo). Robert Jeffreys from Sandringham finished 15th overall, including a third in the final shortened race to win the Great Grand Masters division (65yo to 74yo).

In the Standard fleet it was a close battle between two Masters sailors from Port Melbourne Yacht Club. In the end an Apprentice category entrant Matt Blakey (35 to 44yo) had a narrow one point win over the Grand Master sailor (55 to 64yo) Steve Gunther.

There was also close sailing in the 4.7 Division. The overall winner was Hamish Cowell from Blairgowrie Yacht Squadron, with runnerup Angus McIntyre also from Blairgowrie. A protest hearing on a buoy rounding infringement in race 3 was heard at the end of the final day and changed the 4.7 podium results.

The participation and results for youth (under 19) and juniors (under 17) were encouraging for the future of the Laser class in Victoria. In all there were 25 youth and junior sailors competing across the Radial and 4.7 fleets. In the mid- sized rig Radials there were two youth sailors Lachie Weber 4th and Jack Eickmeyer 5th and two junior sailors (under 17) in the top ten results. The fleet of fifteen 4.7 boats were all youth or junior sailors. There was also encouraging participation and results for female sailors, with twelve sailing in the championships and four female skippers including the winner Casey Imeneo in the top 20 Radial results.

Full results for the Victorian Laser championships can be found on

<https://www.clubops.com.au/DisplayResults/DisplayPublicSeriesResults?Id=811&Id2=>

Information on the Victorian Laser Association including boats for sale and the program of Regattas and training programs is on <https://www.laser2020.com/>