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The Etchells 2023 NSW Championship supported by the Bendigo Bank and hosted by Gosford Sailing Club continued on Brisbane Waters on the NSW Central Coast today, and First Tracks, skippered by Peter “Billy” Merrington, with Ian McKillop and Grant Simmer had an all but perfect day with a 1, 1, 2, 1 to take the regatta lead.

“It actually ended up being a bit more breeze than expected, which was great. 9-11 knots for most of the day, it was pretty perfect” said Peter “Billy” Merrington of the racing for day two.

“It was fairly steady at 055, equally shifty as you would expect in this waterway, so plenty of little puffs to look out for. We had four good starts as well, which made life a bit easier” he admitted humbly.

“The Race Committee are doing a really good job, they know their waterway pretty well which means they do a really nice job of setting a course, they don't worry about the micro wind shifts, which meant that today they set the course at 055 and knocked the races out quickly” said Merrington.

“GT sailed a really solid day today, he won one race. We had some really solid battles over the course of the day with positions going back and forward, and with two races tomorrow we know we need to keep an eye on them,” said Merrington of the now second-placed team on Magpie AUS1486.

“We just got the band back together and are working out how to do it again, so we've got a long way to go, but know exactly what to do,” said Magpie's James Mayo of the team skippered by Graeme “GT” Taylor.

“We left a lot of our points out on the racecourse, just with the simple things, but we know exactly where we left them. Conditions were pretty tricky at the start, and if you weren't able to get the first shift you had to be careful not to rip your cards up, and to just be patient and eliminate the mistakes”.

“Billy did a good job, he's been doing a lot of training and you can see that, and they are where they should be. We always work extremely well and this is the first time we have sailed together for a few years and it was like putting a glove back on and yeah, it's good fun to be back in the fleet”, Mayo concluded.

On the camaraderie of the Etchells class, Merrington commented, “it's great to see the Queenslanders have a really good race as they have travelled so far”.

“Being from Brisbane we had no idea about Lake sailing so yesterday was a massive humbling learning curve. Never been to Gosford before. Today we were more in tune with shifts and pressure lanes and boat set up,” said Todd Anderson, skipper of TAG.

“Good conditions today for Etchells, always flat water and some opportunities. Worth the drive for the experience and Etchells camaraderie and very high level of sailing” he concluded.

“Squark [Pie AUS947] and Matt Ramaley also had a really good day, they are ones to watch out for at future regattas” said Merrington of the other standouts for the day.

Matt Ramaley and his team on AUS1463 were awarded the Oyster Cup for day one of the event, with Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron taking out the team event.

“We focused on our starts and consolidating with the fleet in the top third to avoid falling off the edge of the breeze, a big lesson from yesterday” said Matt Ramaley. “That meant we patiently took our medicine on some consolidations but top ten consistency was the payback”.

“The sailing is hard, but it’s good learning on risk management. Not every venue is going to be a solid 15-20 from the northeast like Sydney Harbour so we renewed some lessons this weekend. We are enjoying our sailing, reinforcing consistent go-to settings and racing the boat. Mark [Langford] has done a great job of building Jess [Angus] and Hannah [Lanz] into the decision making. Solid contributions from both. It’s a good build up to Perth” he surmised, speaking of the next World Championship that will be held in Australia in just over a year’s time, 18-22 March 2024.

#### Full results

Video Day 1, Terry Calley: <https://fb.watch/iVpWiOCAWI/?mibextid=qC1gEa>

Video Day 2, Terry Calley: <https://fb.watch/iVpRP4siT1/?mibextid=qC1gEa>

This regatta would not be possible without the sponsors, Bendigo Bank the sole Gold Sponsor, and our Silver Sponsors, North Sails who have supplied a new jib as the mid fleet prize, Whale Spars with a new Etchells Boom, Peter McNeill Sails who have supplied vouchers, Burke Racing with Competitor Caps, DeckHardware have donated a Main Sheet, Jib Sheets, and Spinnaker Sheets, AMBIDA provided the Bow Numbers, Harken sponsored the regatta with a Megapro 15-in-1 Multi Bit Screwdriver and CUB the all important dockside beers on return to the marina after racing. The club and regatta are also supporting Sailability Gosford.

In addition to the on water sponsorship and support, thanks to Heidi Tai Chi for the warm up this morning, and Stretch Lab in Terrigal & Newcastle for the stretching tomorrow before the final day of racing.

