

Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Sheen and Lowry to sail finals of Blind Match Racing

Semi finals of the IFDS Blind Match Racing Championships were sailed today off Royal Perth Yacht Club in Matilda Bay with skippers from Great Britain and New Zealand progressing to tomorrow's final.

Top ranked sailor after the round robins, Vicki Sheen (GBR), selected Craig Gordon (AUS) as her opponent for the first matches today. Gordon appeared to have the first match in the bag after winning the start and getting a penalty on Sheen near the top mark. But Sheen had other ideas, exonerating her penalty and drawing level with Gordon just to windward of the finish line. With less than a boat length to the line, Gordon infringed in a port – starboard incident and had to make his turns before finishing, handing the win to Sheen.

The second match was a procession after Gordon made a poor start, but the next match involved a number of lead changes and some close encounters with Sheen finally crossing 1 length ahead to book her place in the final.

Russell Lowry (NZL) and Luigi Bertanza (ITA) sailed the other semi final series. The steady 6-7 knots of north-easterly that held all morning started to soften around noon.

In their first heat Bertanza won the start and placed a loose cover on Lowry up the first beat. Lowry slowly made up ground over the 4 legs, sailing over the top of Bertanza down the left hand side of the course on the final run, gybing over to force a port starboard penalty 50 metres before the finish.

Match 2 took three attempts to complete. In the first run, racing was very close and there was minor contact at the leeward mark with three penalties given, two cancelling each other out and one exonerated by Lowry. There was confusion when Lowry took an unnecessary penalty turn just before the finish handing the win to Bertanza, but an on-water hearing later decided to re-sail the heat.

In the first re-sail of match 2, Bertanza won the start but Lowry was within a few boatlengths at each rounding. As they reached the top mark for the send time, the weakening breeze finally evaporated, the match abandoned and racing postponed while the sea breeze settled in.

Back on the water after an hour's rest, racing re-commenced in a south westerly of about 8 knots. Bertanza again had the upper hand from the start but Lowry closed the distance after Bertanza had to take a turn for hitting the weather mark. In a close finish where Bertanza had the leeward advantage, he clipped the yellow finish mark and a certain win dissolved in an instant.

Lowry got off the line faster in match 3 and out-paced Bertanza up the first windward. The Italian seemed to be magnetically attracted to the rounding marks today and had two minor scrapes with the weather mark, incurring two penalties in the process. Lowry crossed the finish clear by almost half a leg to secure his place in the final against Sheen.

RPYC Race Officer John Rosser has kept the matches turning over and the program on schedule all week.

"The standard of racing has certainly increased as the week has moved on", he observed.

"Compared to regular match racing, the pre-start and boat on boat manoeuvres are not as accurate, but it is so much more difficult for these blind sailors to judge distance mainly by sound signals. They are a great group of sailors and the competitiveness and camaraderie amongst them is superb", said Rosser.

The petit finals and championship finals will be held tomorrow to conclude the regatta.

Full results are available at www.rpyc.com.au

ENDS

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Photo Captions:

1. Vicki Sheen (GBR) has secured her place in the final of the IFDS Blind Match racing Championship in Perth
2. Dennis Manning, Nick Donnini & Vicki Sheen (GBR) happy to be in the final
3. Russel Lowry (NZL) has beaten Luigi Bertanza (ITA) for the right to sail against Sheen in the final
4. Tom Donaghy, Russell Lowry & Paulien Eitjes (NZL) ashore after their win