

Australian Women's Keelboat Regatta 2020

The #COVID19 pandemic has brought many interested parties to Sailonline's door over the past weeks/months – from small clubs to large organisations - with a desire to provide their members with something sailing related during lockdown. The majority of these requests have been well accommodated by a superb cooperation between “marketing” and the Sailonline Race Committee either by way of tailored events, such as this one, or by highlighting relevant races already in our Racing Calendar. As a small, volunteer-run, flexible organisation it is not surprising that Sailonline has really shown itself at its best.

The Australian Women's Keelboat Regatta (“AWKR”) was meant to be raced in reality in June 2020 but despite Australia having coped magnificently in keeping its people safe, it was decided that this event, bringing racers from all over the world to beg, borrow or steal a boat to race in it, should be cancelled. Looking for an alternative and being already aware of Sailonline's existence it was natural to see if Sailonline would accommodate this short course inside Port Phillip Bay and, Sailonline agreed that it both could and would!

I have been racing on Sailonline for many years, with mixed success – never on a podium but often, when I concentrate, doing reasonably well. Unfortunately, this race, however perfectly timed for my UK day, turned out not to be even a remotely good one for me as a competitor, although, as I have subsequently learned, I am on the Women's Podium for the event!

Why was I not competitive? You may well ask. Those who know me know that, when in the right mood, I enjoy good conversation or general chit-chat, so when I saw that the AWKR itself was going to be hosting a ZOOM-a-long, in principle to bring the erstwhile real racers together while racing in the virtual event, I decided that it would be a comradely thing to do to log on. The link was posted in Sailonline's race chat, after all, so it was evident that the intention was for SOLers to join in.

I logged in to Zoom and, as my lockdown hair was looking particularly mad, I decided I would leave the video off. Not for long though, as it was apparent that I wasn't going to be a mere listener – with challenges including “so how many husbands have you had and how many children”, it was really not going to be possible to stay silent! The AWKR participants were super welcoming and, but for technical issues that threw me offline for some while, it would have continued that way. By the time I was back online, recovered my course in the race and re-entered the Zoom chat, the majority of folks had pushed off.

My Sailonline race was thus more of a “conversation while occasionally thinking about rounding an upcoming mark” than full-on concentration. As ever, with relatively short races, I had had high hopes I might do well, but I arrived in 24th place which was further back than I had wanted.

I believe the AWKR organisation was delighted with how the Sailonline race raced and even if the event goes ahead in reality in 2021, they'd very much like to have a virtual race again too – so that folks ashore can try and compete with the real yachties! No mention was made of trackers so we could bring the IRL boats on-screen but – who knows what may be possible in the future!

A fun race that completed in a decent time for a Sailonline sprint (the winner arrived in 4h 44m 32s) which will be good to race again.

RainbowChaser /June 2020