



BE THE BEST, ENJOY IT THE MOST

## Nick's Blog – Aussies Open Day 2

I'll get emotional. And you won't blame me, will you.

Argh let's get on with it, the Tale Of Two Relays.

Charles Dickens begins his famous novel by almost the same name\* with the epic opening line: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times". But there are no worst of times here at Maroochydore. These are great times, my friends, and I will always remember them as great, because of the two races that unfolded today, on the crisp sands and uncertain waters of the Place Of The Black Swans.

That's the Indigenous meaning of the word "maroochy". But anyway.

The open women's board relay final was held in the pink racing area, some time around 12.30pm. When I got to the tent around 10.45am, the three protagonists were engaged in a discussion over who should go first. "We thought we might try something different in the semis," Lizzie ventured. Jemma Smith sat there, quietly, trying to keep a straight face.

"Oh God we're overthinking it aren't we," said Maddie Spencer, and they all started laughing.

They totally were, but why shouldn't they? These three were right in the mix and they knew it. As the race drew closer, it began to bring on some nerves. "Tell us some wisdom," Lizzie said to me. Oh no, I thought, I have no wisdom!

I just knew one thing, they were a great team. Win, lose or draw, that would remain the truth.

The race was brutal, fast, uncompromising. Spencer went out super hard and took a solid lead, and I instantly thought, dammit, what use am I as a coach? The distances involved in these relays were a bit staggering today — a minute 30 out, 40 seconds around, a minute 45 back. High pressure had settled over the area, and a light hot offshore wind blew. The winning game plan was: get out with the leaders, draft someone, make them work, pick them up on the way in. Three others took advantage of Spencer's sheer power in this way. She got nothing from the ocean coming back.

Lizzie went in third, 25 metres back. It takes around 10 seconds to paddle 25 metres. Somehow she took those 10 seconds back from the two leaders. I have no idea where that comes from. Well, no, that is not true. I know exactly where it comes from, the state of mind, the hard focus on rhythm and pace, the blanking out of all else. For all that Lizzie again got nothing from the ocean. She ran around

## 2021 Aussies

Place: 2nd  
Points: 104



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and tagged Jemma in second, and Jemma hit the water alongside Northcliffe's great paddler Danielle McKenzie.

Honestly you wouldn't back Superman against Jemma Smith when the chips are down, but then the ocean decided this race. Jemma sensed D-Mac's big rush off the beach and thought, go in behind her, draft her out. Got in the slot. And an 18-inch wave popped up, let Danielle over it, and kinda broke on Jemma's back.

They ended up with bronze, but it was a great bronze. It was earned with pain and with heart. I love them for it. That would have been enough for me.

But that was not all of today, oh no.

This Academy has — will have, by the end of this Aussies — nine years under its belt. We've won literally every race at the carnival at one point or another, some a few times. We'd never won the open men's board relay. It's gnawed at the crew, a bit. It's definitely gnawed at me.

Back in November, we decided, we have to put the acid on this race. We need a plan. We made one. It involved flat water training, once a week, hard. The theory was, everyone has the skills, but would they do the work?

Some of the sets were horrible. Eight point five kilometres, broken down into scaling efforts. Eight by 500m timed efforts. Twenty by two-minute efforts. They didn't want to do these sets but they did want to do them, sometimes because they felt like a challenge, sometimes because they knew if they didn't, they wouldn't be in this race. "There's nothing like the flat," said Charlie Brooks, over and over — like me, he was fixated on this race and what it would take. "We gotta do the flat. Every week till Aussies."

We watched all the races leading up to it and made hard decisions about who should be there and where they should be in the order, and why. Charlie leading because he's a great starter and races smart — doesn't need to lead till the finish. A fast start gives you choices. Jacko in the middle because my god, nobody else has a Jacko for the middle leg. Zach for the finish because he's his own man and he can run like the wind.

Unlike the women, they didn't seem nervous. Nobody did. Even on the line, with so many people watching intently, the whole beach turned toward them, all the racers seemed poised and relaxed.

The gun, bang. Charlie went and made this very cool, in-the-moment sort of decision to bunny-hop for a moment on the sandbar, and slotted easily in behind the actual bunny, the one who'd jumped to the lead. I looked over at Brooksy 30 metres away, and he raised his hand, as if to say perfect.

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It was tight on the way in, but it kinda wasn't. A little bump came on the sandbar and Charlie and three others rode away a bit. Charlie came out and ran to the lead and tagged Jacko, and then I realised, actually, another club did have a Jacko. It was Surfer's Paradise and his name was Alistair Day. Ali went up the inside like a scorched cat, but really, even for him, this was the wrong move. It put Jackson in to the prime position of drafting a leader.

They came back to the bank and a miracle occurred, Jacko went to his knees. All season we have been wrestling with this. Jackson is so strong he can get away with prone paddling more than he should, but he doesn't do it because it's better, or faster, or whatever. He does it because he feels safer prone than upright. He doesn't feel free on his knees. Or he didn't. He should now, because he paddled the last 150 metres of this crucial relay leg on his knees and came up level with Ali Day in the process. The pair rode down a little bump together and sent in Nathan Gray for Surfer's, and Zach for us.

So this was time for a cool head and Zach had a cool head. Cool enough to let Nathan go to the lead and slot in behind him.

Who was there. Zach's Dad Aaron, gazing sceptically through binoculars. James, by himself knee deep in the shorie. Trent was there, I knew. Robert Welborn, and Amy, standing back and trying to pick out the colours. North Bondi's coach Scott Thompson. Max was for sure watching somewhere. Others I didn't know. I felt like all the great young board racers who've passed through our ranks, the gold-silver combo relay teams from the under 19s in Perth, the people who'd have loved to be in this team but couldn't be, all were somewhere in the air around this last minute or so, as Zach pushed himself up into the front of the race and went to the sandbar with three others, hammer and tongs. On to the same little bump. Carried to the sand. Standing up first, or maybe just cleanest, and then running like Zach can run when he chooses, which is to say, away from the best finishers in board racing, and running to the line for the gold.

Then everyone was there.

The moment, blurred, came back into focus. And I thought, we've done it.

And then I thought, knowing it to be true: I'll never forget it.

\*A Tale Of Two Cities. Possibly the birth of the modern psychological novel. Strongly recommended!

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## The Rower's Day

Report by *Michael King*

Some of Newport's surfboat crews had their first races today. All crews had three races, round robin and pointscore and a 50% cut at the end. The U23 women Thunder, flying under the radar after season disrupted by injuries, won three out of three, putting the wind up all of the 'favourites'. The Shellfish, reserve men, powered through to the elimination rounds. Unfortunately, our other ressie men missed the cut on a count back, as did the reserve women 'Nudies'. Also missing out by a point were the u23 girls 'Nemos'. Tomorrow the Open men and u19s show what they've got, as well as the Lifesaver relay

## Beach Report

Report by *Tristan Conn*

Tonight saw the Beach sprinters take centre stage as the track lit up under lights at Mooloolaba. The fastest men and women from around Australia gathered to determine who would be quickest over the sand.

Newport was strongly represented by Kristie Edwards, Jake Lynch, Jett Van Der Wallen and Bailee Radford.



In one of the strongest Men's sprint fields to be assembled Newport's Jake Lynch performed admirably to make the Eight man final.

The Women's sprint field was equally as strong. Newport's Kristie Edwards, coming straight from making the 100m Australian Athletics Championships final, again proved why she is one of Australia's premier up and coming sprinters. In a race that was tight to the finish Kristie came away with second place to take the silver medal.

Tomorrow night will see the team work together and compete in the mixed relay. So don't miss out on watching Newport's Fastest compete under lights at Mooloolaba.

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## Open medal **WINNERS** & point scorers to date

4

Open Champion Lifesaver	Jemma Smith
U17 Ski Relay	Bailey Clues/Jake Morris/Mitch Morris
Open RescueTubeRescue	Olivia Lovell/Jemma Smith/Sascha Taurins/Lizzie Welborn
Open Board Relay	Jackson Borg/Charlie Brooks/Zach Morris

5

U17 Patrol Competition	Emma Carrol/Travis Cox/Sam Capell/Kai Raffles
Open Surf Team	Emily Doyle/Jemma Smith/Maddie Spencer/Lizzie Welborn
Open Ski Relay	Jemma Smith/Sascha Taurins/Lizzie Welborn
U19 Surf Team	Logan Kaye/Lee Melbourne/Mitch Morris/Zach Morris
Open RescueTubeRescue	Emily Doyle/ Deandra Godoy/Jami Prowse/Maddie Spencer
Open Beach Sprint	Kristie Edwards

7

U17 2KM Ocean Swim	Kimberley Doyle
Open 2KM Ocean Swim	Emily Doyle
U19 Champion Lifesaver	James Simmonds
Open Ski Relay	Max Brooks/Jayke Rees/Mitch Trim
Open Board Relay	Jemma Smith/Maddie Spencer/Lizzie Welborn
U17 Surf Team	Bailey Clues/Lee Melbourne/Jake Morris/Mitch Morris
U19 Board Relay	Jake Morris/Mitch Morris/Zach Morris

### TOP 6 FINISHERS

4<sup>th</sup>

Open Champion Lifesaver	Phoebe Savage
Open Make Ski Relay	Luke Jones/Luke Morrison/Greg Tobin

5<sup>th</sup>

U19 2KM Ocean Swim	Logan Kaye
Open 2KM Ocean Swim	Jami Prowse
Open Patrol Competition	Phoebe Savage/Bec Capell/Brendan Capell/Guyren Smith/ Jeremy Paul/Chloe Van Dam
2KM Beach Run	Quentin Reeve
U19 Board Relay	Analise Kibble/Madi Louw/Sascha Taurins

6<sup>th</sup>

U17 Champion Lifesaver	Kai Raffles
U19 Surf Team	Katelynn Doyle/Kimberley Doyle/Jodi Louw/Madi Louw
U17 Surf Team	Katelynn Doyle/Kimberley Doyle/Analise Kibble/Jodi Louw