



QLD Beneteau Cup: Blunderbluss wins line honours in tough first race

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'Blunderbuss and The Matrix approach the finish with only a boat length separating them after 19 gruelling miles - Ensign Yacht QLD French Yacht Challenge and Beneteau Cup 2012' Tracey Johnstone ©

Tony Kinsman's new First 40 was put through its paces today as it raced through everything, from soft air and flat water to choppy seas and 30 knot shifty winds, to take out line honours in the Ensign Yachts French Yacht Challenge and Beneteau Cup.

'It's fantastic to get line honours in our first race. We noticed some small, but significant improvements on the previous model which is going to set us up for some great sailing in the future,' Kinsman said.

In the French Yacht Challenge it was all to the little boats with Michael Schmidt's Jeanneau 32, Flight Deck, defending last year's title ahead of Rob Smith's First 29.5 Lady Jaqualyn.

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Jubilant at the finish, the team from Flight Deck with Michael Schmidt on the helm - Ensign Yacht QLD French Yacht Challenge and Beneteau Cup 2012 - Tracey Johnstone ©

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Reading the weather forecast was the key to today's race as the winds did what the forecaster predicted; mid-morning soft airs building to mid-afternoon madness of gusts up to 42 knots.

Competitors in the Ensign Yachts Queensland French Yacht Challenge and Beneteau cup were greeted this morning with bright blue skies, red, white and blue flags and greetings of bonjour, comment allez-vous, from the fleet's Francophiles as they gathered at Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron for croissants and a race briefing.

Ensign Yachts representative, Tony Ross, asked the skippers to take it easy on the new yachts in the fleet, but keep Rob Robertson's and his First 40 honest having had the advantage of already completing one regatta with his new boat, Lunchtime Legend.

On the water, race officer Sylvia Talbot played the French national anthem before sending the 28-boat fleet into the start sequence for the 19 nautical mile race around Peel Island.

Tentative about his first sail on the brand new First 40, Blunderbuss, Tony Kinsman, took the pin end of the start line with the Mini Transat 6.5m, Ensign Racing Mini, Bluebottle and Roland Dane's Tofinou 9.5m, Jessandra.

Robertson started about middle of the line. The Matrix's helm, Jane Virtue, drove the biggest boat of the fleet though the smaller boats to place it comfortably mid line and away from the stragglers.

It was an expensive start for Gary Richardson as the promised racing horns came out and he pushed his new Oceanis 40, Vera May, too hard on the start line to cross over early. Mike Mollison's Scamp, another Oceanis 40, was also early.

Clear of the line Kinsman settled into working out how to sail his boat, this being his first day out on the water. The worries of yesterday's last minute jobs including loading sails, tensioning the rig and calibrating all the instruments disappeared as they slipped along nicely in the soft four to five knot northerly.

It was weight down and out for the leg to Peel Island. The First 40 footers led the fleet around the first mark with Blunderbuss ahead of Lunchtime Legend then the 50-foot The Matrix.

As the fleet spread out Blunderbuss stayed out to the right while Lunchtime Legend, The Matrix, Paul Laurence's First 30, G2, and Gary McCarthy's First 34.7, Brilliant Pearl, stayed left and on the rhumb line to the northern end of Peel Island.

At the top of Peel Island, The Matrix led the fleet with Blunderbuss about four boat lengths behind and then Lunchtime Legend another 10 boat lengths, sailing in a soft, shifting breeze gusting to 10 knots.

As the start boat team watched anxiously the sky and sea conditions changed near to 1330 hours, a safety call from shore put everyone on the bay on notice of an impending strong and fast moving increase in breeze. It wasn't long before the swell built and breeze kicked left to 240 degrees and gusted up to 32 knots before settling into a steady 20 plus knots.

The track to the finish line was nothing like the first half of the race. On the breeze, no reefs, weight up and right out, the 40 footer Blunderbuss went tack for tack against The Matrix battling swell, gusty winds and the clock in the last .8 mile of the race to finish five seconds ahead on the line. Next came Lunchtime Legend just one minute and 11 seconds behind.

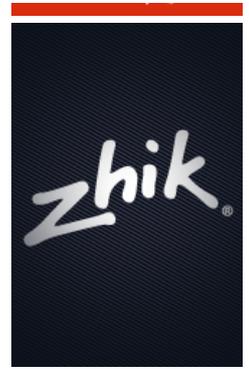


Line honours winner, Tony Kinsman's new Blunderbuss - Ensign Yacht QLD French Yacht Challenge and Beneteau Cup 2012 - Tracey Johnstone ©

the head of the change from the west. So we positioned ourselves for that which got us back close to Matrix again. We were coming out of the tacks a bit faster than Matrix so we engaged in a tacking duel and managed to just get ahead of them bit by bit. We finished about half a boat length on the line,' Kinsman said.

Brilliant Pearl sailed a superb race against the clock to be the first of the small boats to finish, well ahead of the G2 the Beneteau 30.

Then came the reefed and furled cruising members of the fleet slowing worked their way to the finish. The last boat to call it quits was the smallest, the 6.5m Ensign Racing Mini, which limped back into port with a very tired and battered two-man crew.





Back at the bar its stories all round for First 40 owners Rob Robertson and Tony Kinsman - Ensign Yacht QLD French Yacht Challenge and Beneteau Cup 2012 - Tracey Johnstone ©

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by Tracey Johnstone



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