

420 action hots up at Sail Auckland

It is all happening in the Southern Hemisphere right now! News is just in about 420s in action at Auckland, New Zealand.

Remember the 2007 Takapuna Worlds? Well, after their resounding success scooping all the podium slots, many of those Kiwis moved on (or back!) to their Olympic campaigns. So there is some room for those who have been knocking on the door, and several talented younger sailors are coming into the Class to join the more experienced.

Among the newcomers are the current Optimist World Champion, Chris Steele (the first ever Kiwi to win the Oppies) and World Women's Champion, Alexandra Maloney, who finished the Optimist Worlds in Cagliari in over-all bronze! Among the 420 guys whose footsteps they follow are Paul Snow-Hansen, who won Silver at the 2004 Oppie Worlds, and Carl Evans, who followed some good Worlds results with twice being 420 World Champion helm – in Gran Canaria and Takapurna.

But there are some more experienced 420 teams to beat, with those Berry girls, Sarah & Emma, campaigning again after just missing a podium place at the Women's Worlds at Takapurna. And Alexandra evidently appreciates an experienced crew when she sees one as she is sailing with last year's silver medallist, Bianca Barbarich-Bacher.

As Christine Hansen of the NZL 420 Class says "(we are) in a growth phase after a quiet year following the Worlds. I think there's quite a lot of interest in entering the 2008 Worlds in Greece, and the Youth spot will be hotly contested as well, as there are a number of ex-opti sailors coming through who performed very well at the last Worlds (and) who will be pushing a few who are in their 2nd or 3rd season in the boat". The Class ran a training clinic immediately prior to Junior Sail Auckland with favourable feed back and the sailors seemed to enjoy themselves.

Sail Auckland has had a bit of re-organisation since last year. They agreed to facilitate a four-day event for 420s, while not missing school (shame!), by splitting this over two weekends. The first (9 & 10 February) was Junior Sail Auckland – with the Optimists and Cadets – and then the 420s sail, on the 470 course, for two days at Sail Auckland 2008 on 16 & 17 February. There will be international attention on the Lasers and tornados especially, with leading sailors still seeking selection for the Beijing Olympics. But we know what matters is also the emergence of another generation of sailors ready to take on the world, and New Zealand seems determined to pitch!