

Uncovered

Australia's top International 14 crew emerged with the world title after a rival's tight cover led to the protest room, by Lauren Bartlett

AUSTRALIAN CREW Lindsay Irwin and Andrew Perry triumphed as champions after a tough jury decision in the final race of the International 14 world championship in Auckland, New Zealand. During race seven, spectators witnessed a nail-biting finale, as the expected winners, Irwin and Perry were nowhere to be seen amongst the first ten boats around the top mark.

Irwin Sails had placed well in the regatta gaining either first or second place in five of the previous six races. To win the world title, the Black Rock Yacht Club crew needed to finish within eleven places of the RMW Marine-sponsored Brits, Stevie Morrison and Ben Rhodes. After finishing in 14th position to Morrison and Rhodes' second place, Irwin protested another British entry, Alister Richardson and Ian Barker, on the grounds of sportsmanship and fair play. Richardson and Barker, also sponsored by the British skiff builder RMW Marine, had clamped an extremely tight cover on the Australians on the final leg of the last race (see *The Protests*, overleaf).

Several hours later the rest of the fleet eagerly awaited the result during the presentation evening. The Aussie crew was awarded redress, and moved to 10th position in heat seven, therefore winning the series. Champagne flowed.

During the presentation Andrew Perry commented that it was "absolutely fantastic to arrive in a position they had worked so hard for over the years." Irwin was happy with the outcome, although he would have preferred the win to be in "better circumstances".

The rest of the regatta, hosted by the Takapuna Boating Club on Auckland's Hauraki Gulf was remarkably quiet for the international jury.

At the beginning of the week, race one proved to be disastrous for many, as strong winds meant that more than 30 boats did not finish. After a late night of repair work, many of the fleet were back on the water the following day, only to experience light, shifty conditions. After several hours spent

Results

1. L.Irwin/A.Perry, AUS, 2-1-1-27-2-1-rdg(10), 17pts;
2. S.Morrison/B.Rhodes, GBR, 3-7-4-1-6-4-2, 20;
3. J.Fawcett/D.Dobrijevic, GBR, dnf-8-5-2-1-6-7, 29;
4. D.Slater/N.Handley, NZL, 4-14-8-10-3-17-15, 54;
5. B.Devine/D.Jones, AUS, 10-12-2-3-21-10-35, 58;
6. J.Beebe/T.Berg, AUS, 8-9-13-7-18-ocs-3, 58;
7. R.Blasse/A.Gilligan, AUS, 12-13-17-6-11-11-40, 70;
8. G.Geddes/D.Wilsdon, AUS, 1-3-9-29-13-ocs-25, 80;
9. I.Pinnell/R.Kent, GBR, 15-17-7-18-14-14-27, 85;
10. D.Hayter/A.Pollitt, AUS, dnf-5-11-22-26-3-24, 91.

drifting in the sun the race was postponed until the following day.

On day three two races were held and yet another shift in the weather allowed for a blustery day at 15-20kts. Irwin and Perry began to dominate, enjoying the fresh conditions and winning both races.

Day four produced lighter conditions, which suited the young British team of Morrison and Rhodes who placed first. Compatriots Jamie Fawcett and Dave Dobrijevic, who had been among the casualties in the gusty first heat, managed to regain lost points with a second placing, which helped them on the way to third overall. Meanwhile, Irwin and Perry had their worst result, buried deep in the 83-boat fleet at 27th.

Race five proved to be troublesome at the start, with sloppy seas and a strong tide leading to many boats being over the line. Two general recalls later, the fleet was off, helped along by a 12kt breeze. Race one winner and former world champ Grant Geddes with Dan Wilsdon of Victoria won the race from Irwin and Perry, after the finish gun failed to fire for another former world champ, Zach Berkowitz (USA), scored an ocs. The leading New Zealand crew, Dan Slater and Nathan Handley, had their best result with a third.

Race six was led much of the way by the distinctive Black Rock YC boat, *Wam*. But Alan Vickery and Andrew Wilson suffered disappointment on the finish line, discovering that they too, were ocs. Irwin and Perry took the win, while Chris Turner and Peter Bagwell (GBR) placed second and David Hayter and Alan Pollitt (AUS) were third.

Anticipation mounted as the final race got underway in an 8-12kt north-easterly breeze, and the first boat around the top mark was USA 1150, helmed by Ron Boehm and crewed by International 14 class association president Peter Mohler. The regatta leaders Irwin and Perry were back in 32nd place while Morrison and Rhodes were ahead by enough points to win the title.

At the second mark the Canadian team of Kris Bundy and Jamie Hanseler edged ahead and hung on to the lead to win, their only placing within the top ten during the regatta.

In the meantime, Irwin and Perry had taken the left side of the second beat, contrary to the majority of the fleet, and lifted to 23rd at the end of that

BELOW: Big 83-boat fleet gets underway (Outside Images).



Lindsay Irwin and Andrew Perry in *Irwin Sails* were dominant in the fresh stuff (Paul Todd/Outside Images pictures).