

Media Release

Kaikohe, Monday 3 December 2007



Olympians a hit with would-be sailors

Despite the early summer weather delivering cool and damp conditions, around 55 Far North youngsters, took part in the third annual Top Energy Sailing Week regatta held on Lake Manuwai, Kerikeri over the weekend.

Sailing Week is an annual recreational/educational initiative sponsored by local lines network company, Top Energy in co-operation with Team Inspiration (NZ Women's Olympic keelboat sailors, Sharon Ferris [Skipper] with crew, Raynor Smeal and Shandy Buckley).

Top Energy sponsors Team Inspiration in its build-up to contesting Gold at the Beijing Olympics next year. As part of that sponsorship arrangement, Team Inspiration co-hosts Sailing Week – to share their sailing expertise and goal-achieving experiences with Far North youngsters.

The event offered FREE entry to Far North school children aged 8–16 who were invited to register for either or both days of sailing tuition, fun events and racing. Yachts and safety equipment were provided for those who had no previous sailing experience, while those who sailed were encouraged to bring along their own boats and enjoy some more advanced sailing instruction and racing.

On Day 1, as well as the serious business of learning to sail, the children were treated to a presentation by David Ferris, who was bowman and sailmaker aboard The Black Pearl, Pirates of the Caribbean, the Disney-sponsored Volvo Open 70 Racer in last year's Volvo Ocean Race. (Sailing with legendary skipper Paul Cayard, they placed second overall.) David shared some insights into the sort of wet weather gear the crew wore during the grueling Southern Ocean leg, as well as letting the children experience the 'legendary' freeze-dried food the crew 'enjoyed' during that epic race.

For the rest of the day the children enjoyed a variety of fun events and racing including 'The Bottle Run' (sailing around a series of marker buoys to collect as many bottles as possible and then trade them for 'treats' at the finish) and 'Follow-the-leader', where they had to manoeuvre their yachts by tacking and gybing to stay behind the coach boat. There were competitive races arranged for more advanced sailors too, including racing around an Olympic Course. Both days

ended with a formal prize giving. Certificates were handed out to all sailors as a reminder of their day's fun on the water and trophies were awarded to various category winners, as follows:

Saturday – Day 1:

Personality Plus: Shinae Smythe
Team Player : Aiden Tweedy and Sergio Hansen (joint winners)
Most Improved : Taylor Rosenthal
Winner Overall: Klaus Ohlendorf

Sunday – Day 2:

Personality Plus: Darren Baker
Team Player : Jack Dowdle
Most Improved : Cameron Pye
Winner Overall : O'Shea Butler

According to Top Energy Chief Executive Roger de Bray, this year's Sailing Week was another great success. "Sharon, Raynor and Shandy, along with an enthusiastic crew of helpers and parents, had an excellent weekend. Many of the youngsters were introduced to sailing for the first time, while the more experienced sailors among them benefited from a few pointers and racing tips. I know Team Inspiration really enjoys this opportunity to put something back into Far North yachting and as sponsors, we look forward to staging the event each year", de Bray said.

de Bray says Team Inspiration now has a very busy schedule ahead of them leading into their build-up to Beijing next year. "Immediately following Sailing Week presentations on Sunday, the girls had to rush off to Auckland to catch a plane, for a training regatta in Miami, USA. So we certainly appreciate the effort they made to invest some time in our youngsters" he said. END.

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Pics: Assorted.