

Report on Race 1 of Swan River Retro Yacht Series (SRRYS)

The first race of the Swan River Retro Yacht Series was conducted by Royal Perth Yacht Club on Melville Water on the afternoon of Sunday 19th October 2025.

Background

Due to mechanical problems with Challenger and the commitment of ORPYC to OTB events, the Race Management team was allocated Pelican (the usual Safety Boat) and the Safety Team had to use a RIB on loan from Swan River Sailing. This was not an ideal situation.

The start line was just SW of Foam buoy.

Forecast Weather

Initial forecasts by the Bureau of Meteorology and Seabreeze generally agreed that the wind would be from the WNW to NW at 15-20kts and 16 to 13 kts, respectively. I saw nothing to suggest the intense squall that would eventuate sometime around 14:00, some 30 minutes after the start of the first of three fleets. We did not think it necessary to fly the "Y" flag.

Actual Weather

As mentioned above, a severe squall crossed the Swan River from a northwesterly direction at about 14:00. Alma (Ralph Newton) reported that they had experienced 35 knots of wind speed and torrential rain. They subsequently retired from the race. Royal Perth Yacht Club Captain Dinghies (Michael Jones), on ORPYC, reported a wind speed of 25 knots. ORPYC was stationed in the vicinity of Brewery buoy.

Incident 1

During the squall and while rounding Dolphin East buoy the skipper of Sirocco (1201) Mark De San Miguel was thrown overboard. His crew member was unable to pull him back onboard due to, what Mark thought, was the extra weight of his waterlogged wet weather jacket. A passing skiff crew was able to get hold of him until the Safety Boat crew arrived a short time later. They then took him on board and back to his boat. Sirocco then retired and arrived safely back at the RPYC Crawley Marina. Both crew were wearing 100N inflatable PFD's.

Mark is now rethinking the emergency access to the stern of his Thunderbird yacht.

Incident 2

Sometime shortly after the first incident, Kailani (60), skippered by James Bennett, capsized and fully inverted about 400m west of Foam buoy. The two-person crew was able to quickly right the boat as it has an asymmetrical flooding system designed to work in this scenario. With the crew standing on the keel the recovery was surprisingly quick which caused James to fall into the water.

James did note that even with minimal wet weather clothing, that after it got waterlogged, it was difficult to get back onboard via the side of the boat. He easily reboarded the boat via a step built into the rudder. Both crew were wearing 50N PFD's.

The Safety Boat crew arrived shortly after the incident but their assistance was not required. Kailani then retired and arrived safely back at the RPYC Crawley Marina.

James thinks he will develop another system for getting back on board. He is also writing a "Lessons Learned" document to share with his immediate sailing fraternity.

Improvement

While the Safety Boat crew was able to attend both incidents there was an issue with the performance of their handheld VHF radio. Several times I was unable to contact them from the fixed radio on Pelican. Had they not seen the incidents they most likely would have been unable to offer assistance.

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Outcome

Safety Boat equipment should be of a higher standard and duplicated where possible.

I commend the Safety Boat crew, Lily and Ethany, for keeping a good watch in very trying conditions and responding quickly.

As a Club Equipment Auditor, I am heartened by the fact that both skippers have decided, without prompting from me, to reassess their safety systems and share the information gathered from these incidents.

I hope that this report will also help.



AM (Fons) Berkhout

Race Officer of the day

21 October 2025