



September 2011

Newsletter of the Auckland Blokart Club

President's Post



Welcome to this first edition of the Auckland Blokart Club's newsletter to members.

Breaking News

We dial up to start with two items of fantastic news!

1. After seven years of searching for a permanent base, we now have a permanent home at Ardmore
2. Work has begun on sealing the tight corners.

In early September we signed a 3 + 3 year lease with Ardmore Airport which permits ABC to use the facility (our 250 metre stretch of runway and the building) on Saturdays and Sundays, and we can apply for use at other times such as Thursday nights and public holidays.

For major events Ardmore may allow us to use an extended section of runway.

There are some allocated days when the airport needs the use of our area and they will give us plenty of notice. As with the past 18 months, the facility is not available for individual members to rock up for a casual sail - each day must be organised and a committee member present.

Now we have security of tenure we have commenced sealing work to round off the acute-angled corners at the end of the taxiway, and we are using club funds to do this. Thanks to Wayne, Barry, and Russell for their many hours over the past year talking to contractors and suppliers, experimenting with different materials, measuring, and discussing the best layout. A great achievement guys.

Having a lease also enables us to apply for funding for further sealing of track and grass areas and an application is being finalised now.

100 Non-race Days

It's been a busy year so far with the Ardmore Sprints, 100km Race, and Winter Series, and coming up we have the Twilight Series and Auckland Champs. It's not all about racing though. Did you know that ABC races on only 23 days per year? All the other weekend days and every second Thursday night (that's about 100 available days at Ardmore) are for casual sailing and mixing and mingling with other blokart enthusiasts. Don't forget we have three dinners a year, the Christmas picnic day, and of course the unforgettable 3-6 days of fun sailing, partying, and swapping tall tales at 90 Mile Beach every November and February.

That's quite a mixed calendar and there is something in there for keen racers and social members. If there is something else you think the committee can do to make your club more enticing, please let me know.

Wherever your wind blows.

Graham



Inter-Club Challenge - the Kaimai Trophy

The ABC was invited to compete for the first time for the Kaimai Trophy. Originally this was an event for bragging rights between the Bay Blokart Club and Hamilton Blokart Club back in about 2002, with the name coming from the mountain range between to two areas.

With 2 clubs in the Bay and Hamilton sailors belonging to both Kaimai and ABC it was decided to make it a true inter club event.

The first try for the day was postponed through lack of wind. Finally on 11 September, 8 ABC members travelled to Bay Park, home of the BBC, to see what it was all about. Only 1 had sailed regularly there before so it was all a bit unknown.

The wind blew about 8 – 10 knts to start but increased throughout the day, finishing at about 20 knts for the last round of races. There were 3 divisions and the scores from each team in each division were averaged to give an overall club winner of each round. Points were then accumulated, much like Teams racing.

To start, the sailing was a bit tricky as the ABC members worked out which were the fast tracks and when to take some risks of a short cut. With only a top and bottom mark the options were varied on how to get there quickest. If you missed the right track the next option actually took you away from the next mark, losing plenty of time and the shortest route wasn't always the fastest.

Grant Clark and David H were in the lightweights and battled all day with Ross Ludwig with Grant and Ross sharing the wins. David was fighting for the top group with Graeme Bertram, an ABC member but sailing for Kaimai. Graeme is the big improver from our club and kept the top group honest all day.

Russell, Barry and Derek were the middle weight sailors and with Russell and Barry generally being in the front group we averaged out to some good scores although Bob Harding from Kaimai took some wins as well. With Nicko and Les also in this division there was some exciting sailing and many changes of places throughout the races.

Wayne, John S and Trevor P were our heavies with Wayne taking 5 wins from the 9 races with Theo and Don winning the others. Andrew Sands was always there with 3rds and 4ths and ended up second overall in this division.

We mostly started with 5.5s, although Derek hadn't brought his, and this was just right to get downwind for the first few races. With an increase in wind some changed to 4s and then for the last round most changed as the breeze went to 20+ knts. This created a very exciting race track with sharp corners and slippery conditions as the rain had also arrived. For some it was survival sailing and completing the course without spinning out meant a good place. Crossing the grass meant better lines for corners but also meant sliding sideways part of the way, quite spectacular to watch.

The race management was excellent and Leslie kept the races ticking over quickly so that by 2.30 pm everyone had completed 9 races, some in windy conditions.

After the 27 races it was decided to stop the racing as it was getting quite "hairy" and it was time to pack up, dry off everything and head for prize giving. The rain and wind meant everything was wet although it did stop as we packed up the karts for the trip home. At this stage no-one knew who had done well as fortunes changed very quickly on this track with clubs looking for overall good team scores to accumulate points throughout the day rather than individual performances. Individual prizes were given for each division to celebrate 10 years of BBC sailing plus the overall trophy was presented.

Team ABC took out the overall prize, a great team effort, especially as we were 1 sailor down.

Russell Harray

Results

Individual divisions:

Light weights

1st Ross Ludwig
2nd Grant Clark
3rd David Heilbron

Middle weights

1st Russell Harray
2nd Barry Cole
3rd Bob Harding

Heavy weights

1st Wayne Osborne
2nd Andrew Sands
3rd Don McKenzie

The ABC now host the next event, dates yet to be decided, but Club against Club is a good concept and one that should be fostered. It was a most enjoyable day on a tricky track that had plenty of opportunities for big gains and losses, depending on your risk strategy and how you read the wind shifts.



Rugby World Cup Opening Ceremony

by Derek Miles

An email came through from Paul Beckett via Russell Harray inviting Auckland Blokart Club (ABC) members to participate. I jumped at it straight away seeing it as a once in a lifetime opportunity. Surely the offer would not have come through Paul unless blokarting was involved.

The Rehearsal Schedule revealed a large number of hours spread over 7 weeks – after work, on weekends, ABC race days and at least work days. A big commitment in anybody's eyes. This put most other club members off volunteering. All up we would end up spending about 100 hours, but fortunately very little work time because the final dress rehearsals ended up being in the evenings.

I went to first rehearsal (21 July) at Netball Stadium, St Johns where Paul was present having delivered the first blokart. I was the only blokarter there (Rod Horton was missing). This initial turnout would earn me the enviable position of 'BN1' (Blokart Navigator No. 1). Little did I know this would mean I would be first out, solo, on the big night in our segment of the actual Opening Ceremony.

To my surprise, the blokart was electric motor powered. A battery was stowed behind driver seat, electronic pack at the right hip and a compact motor in the hub of the front wheel. The sails, not seen until a few rehearsals in, had a shiny silver foil finish and had large triangular shaped apertures to dispel any wind. No mainsheet; just a pulley whip.

After discovering the low ABC turnout I emailed club members myself to try and drum up more people. Fortunately Paul Hendrix and John Sherlock showed some interest. We would need 8 blokarters in all. We were later joined by Paul's son Jake, Steve Trifunovich, young Steve Erceg and young Tony. The last three were all RWC volunteers who couldn't believe their luck when they found out what they were doing.

Throughout rehearsals things were always changing. Parts came and went. Dance moves were added then removed or altered. Timing was crucial. Everything had to be adapted to suit the music. Unfortunately, us non-musical types were expected to be able to count the beats and recognise the start and beginning of phrases which was no mean feat. I found the music very inspiring and appropriate.

As part of *The Journey* cast each blokarter had an accompanying cast of about seven people; four blokart Waves and three blokart Shields, the latter of which represented our wake.

Each cast member had FM radio receivers enabling us to hear the choreographer's instructions. I discovered later on the earbuds were poor quality. On one occasion at St Johns my receiver was turned off and I didn't hear choreographer Shona's 'from the top' instruction. Shona apparently told "everyone" I was too busy signing autographs.

The costumes were a bit of a dag. Long grey track pants and silver strip hooded tops with shiny baby turtles swimming in formation on the front. We all looked like spacemen and joked about them being condom suits. Cheap white sneakers were standard issue. We didn't get to wear the gear at rehearsals until the Saturday before the event.

At some stage during rehearsals I developed a head cold which left me with impaired hearing in both ears for nearly two weeks. I was a little worried they might replace me if I couldn't hear the calls. Eventually, a little Otravin and steam inhalation helped improve my hearing. Replacing the supplied earbuds with my own Apple iPod earbuds from home greatly improved my reception in the nick of time.

There was a lot of waiting around during the 7 weeks of preparation. Dinners consisted of sandwiches, a muffin and a piece of fruit. Us eight blokarters stuck together most of the time during breaks. Steve T was a hard case with a bit of a wild man appearance. Unshaven and usually wearing a big grin. Steve wore some wild green, and the pink wigs in the last week of rehearsals. He even gifted a shot of Zambuka to each of the team after the big show. An all round nice guy.



The Tack

Jake had a few problems on different occasions with a blokart Wave's flag getting stuck around his front wheel, an insecure mast hood that caused the sail to slip down, and an insecure boom which kinked the sail.

The move to Mt Smart Stadium was exciting. A promise of things to come. Blokarters had problems on the first rehearsal night. It was a clear cool night with a heavy dew. The front tyres 'wheel spun' and we had difficulty gaining speed and momentum on the mesh cloth field cover and spongy grass base. We tried leaning forward to get more traction. I knew then we weren't going to have time to complete some of the practiced moves. The planned grand blokart parade around the perimeter was cut out because it couldn't be completed in time. Shame. Would have liked more time on the field.

The stage (field) was grid marked at each rehearsal location so we knew exactly where to be during the performance. The numbers were hard to see at night time and I had to use other objects to guide my position.

All eight blokarts didn't arrive until about three weeks before the big night. For a long time we only had 1 kart, then 4, then 8. The blokarts generally performed well. Some motors were a bit noisy and brakes a little soft on one.

Support staff looking after the blokarts seemed to be forever changing. Two days before the big night I thought crossed my mind; I wonder if anyone's ever checked the axles. I made a point of checking on "the night" and found one kart had both its rear axles insecure. It would not been a good look if one had come out on the night.

Waiting in VOM3 on the night (all field entrances were number VOM1 to 4) we were all thrilled to see Jonah Lomu come past, shaking hands with the cast as he passed. He was a big man, humble and genuinely happy to be there. Petra Bagust (the night's warm-up act with Jeremy Corbett) came past with a big grin on her face.

The move to Eden Park really made the event seem so much nearer. Cast were tightly crammed into the 'Hall of Legends' under the North stand for briefings and costume fitting. It was like walking through a rabbit warren, always under escort, to get there. During the first dress rehearsals the dressing room was a "sight for sore eyes" with all these butt naked and tattooed Maori's parading themselves around in front of the angelic dressed female dance cast. I think the girls didn't quite know where to look.

Taking of photographs were not allowed during rehearsals right up until the big night. Open slather that night. Ironically, although we were all sworn to secrecy, the morning after Wednesday's Dress Rehearsal there was a front page photo of Rod's blokart in the NZ Herald.

I was a bit nervous on the big night. The changing room was buzzing with nervous excitement. 1060 odd volunteers all rearing to go on. The air was electric. Once the call came all nervousness left me and I went through the motions as we'd practiced many times before.

The ceremony was made up 4 parts: (1) *The Call*, (2) *The Journey* (3) *The Battlefield* and (4) *The Prize* (or finale) lasting about 25 mins in total. The first time I heard *The Call* I was overwhelmed by the mood and sense of awe and anticipation created by the Maori cast. The projected images (not seen until later, on a recording at home) really made this special. Our part, *The Journey*, had the largest cast. Safety was a big concern. The Big Boats were hand pushed by about twelve men and weighed about 2 ton each. Two cast members each had a foot run over in rehearsals. Stopping these big boats on a dime was impossible. The organizers did everything they could to minimize risk of someone getting hurt.

My part involved entering the 'stage' from VOM3 (bottom right) at the start of *The Journey* (avoiding the exiting Maori's) on a diagonal path followed by a wide left turn to the other diagonal, then between John and Steve entering in parallel from the top right corner, then a right turn to join Steve E, Tony and Rod from behind. Our diamond formation headed directly at the other four guys coming from the other side in a similar formation. On the count of '7', we tacked left avoiding collision. We each then proceeded to the edge of the stage and picked up our cast. I proceeded to follow an anti-clockwise wide circle then exited the field in procession with the others. This was followed by

Paul Hendrix



a straight line run up the length of the field in formation with the big boats. Following the 'freeze' we exited the field at VOM4.

After our blokart exit through VOM4 we raced under the South stand to park the karts, took a quick photo, then ran back to join the Choirs queued ready to go on at VOM2. On cue we raced to join 1/2 of *The Journey* cast, lined up waiting beside the West goal posts. When the time came we raced en masse to our positions and began our "World in Union" song and dance routine; John S. and Steve T. alongside me. I struggled with both the singing and the dance moves, concentrating hard on copying the girl in front of me. From there we raced to our final position to hear the opening speeches from John Key and Chairman of the IRB.

When it was all over we returned to the dressing room to await clearance for those staying to watch the game to enter the stadium. (Tickets were not free but offered at a heavily discounted price).

In summary, a fantastic experience from start to finish. A 'real' journey. It was fun meeting new people and great seeing all the parts slowly come together as a whole – all the many hours of rehearsal paying off. The ceremony was masterfully crafted, highly creative, emotionally moving, sometimes haunting, and made you proud to be a Kiwi.



Derek Tony Paul Jake John Steve Rod Steve T.

CALENDAR

September

28-2 NZ Open, Papamoa

October

2 Ardmore - Club Open Day

6 Thursday night warm-up

9 Ardmore - Club Open Day

16 Blokart Training day

20 Thursday night twilight series

23 Ardmore - Club Open day

27 Thursday night twilight series

30 Ardmore - Club Open day

November

5-6 Auckland Champs

17 Thursday night twilight series

20 Blokart Training day

24-27 90 Mile Beach Trip

December

1 Thursday night twilight series

4 Ardmore - Club Open day

11 Christmas picnic

15 Thursday night twilight series

2012

April

9-13 Blokart World Champs, Ivanpah

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