



Swift Racing NZ Coastal Rowing National Beach Sprint Champs

Tāhunanui Beach in Nelson was the place to be on 3 January when Nelson Rowing Club (NRC) and Swift Racing NZ jointly hosted the second National Beach Sprint Champs.

Conditions were sunny and calm with flat water in the morning that built to small waves by early afternoon – ideal for learning about coastal rowing.

In early 2021 the same group hosted the champs at Moturoa Rabbit Island, just outside Nelson. Moving the event to Tāhunanui, the main beach of Nelson, ensured easier access and facilities for rowers and a higher profile for the event.

Eighty rowers came from a number of clubs including Wanaka, Avon, Cure, Shirley Boys' High School, St Margaret's, Picton, Blenheim, Wairau, Petone, Star, Wellington and Horowhenua. Ages ranged from 14 to rowers in their 70s. The 16-strong Wairau summer squad made this their first session after the summer break, and two of the elite Rowing NZ team, Lucy Spoor and Brook Robertson, enjoyed their first coastal rowing races.

The masters at NRC provided crew support (course set-up, coxing, boat catching etc), and most of that group also raced. Race categories included mixed, men's and women's quads and mixed doubles. Some crews entered as 'complete' crews; other individuals registered and were allocated to crews.

Coastal beach sprints is one of two race formats used by World Rowing, the other being a long-course event with 4km heats and 6km finals. Beach sprint races start with a sprint of between 10m and 50m for the rower or one of the rowers. Once all are on

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Taking out the men's quad at NZ Coastal Rowing Sprints could be my proudest 2022 moment. Thanks for a perfect day of racing! We will be back

Lucy, Rowing NZ Summer Squad

board, the crew slaloms around two buoys then turns around a third buoy at 250m and rows straight back to the beach, at which point one of the rowers disembarks and runs to the finish line. As the tide moves up or down the beach the relative length of the sprint and row sections of the races changes. Each race includes two boats in a round-robin format.

The Nelson event followed World Rowing protocols as much as possible. There were NZ registered race officials in place, safety support was provided by Surf Lifesaving NZ and the Nelson Harbourmaster, and commentary was provided by Mark James from Wairau.

This was the sixth beach sprints event that NRC has run in partnership with Swift. “We work hard to improve the beach sprints every time we run them, so that everyone



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*Sally Knight,
NRC secretary & NZ distributor
for Swift Racing*

enjoys the event,” says Tim Babbage, head coach at NRC. “In January, with four quads and two doubles, we had a good system for boat rotation and were able to keep races moving quickly. Forty-five races in five hours is pretty good.”

Course set-up was under the management of NZ race official and NRC member Phil Knight. “Setting a safe, fair and straight two-lane course on moving water with a big tidal change is tricky,” comments Phil. “It took a while to find the right buoys, anchors and range-finding equipment, but this time we nailed it. The NRC masters have great skills in this area and were a huge help.”

Coastal rowing is growing in popularity in Aotearoa and around the world. Coromandel rower Marty Wouters raced at the coastal rowing world champs in Portugal in 2021; this year both the sprints and long-course events are in Wales in October.

As well as the competitive potential, coastals are useful training boats for beginner rowers, they are ideal when water conditions are challenging, and they introduce a big dose of variety for fun club outings. A coastal is a boat that every club member can use.

“We really enjoyed the 2022 beach sprints,” says Sally Knight, NRC secretary and NZ distributor for Swift Racing. “We had a great crowd of happy people rowing at the beach. Some had done lots of coastal rowing, others had never seen a coastal boat before. Elites, masters, school rowers and a big group of competitive club rowers, all were competing hard on the water and having heaps of fun. Karmyn’s photos tell the story of what a good day it was.”

Plans are underway for 2023 with provisional dates of 3 and 4 January. Follow Nelson Rowing Club or Swift Racing NZ on Facebook for updates, or contact Sally at info@swiftracing.nz.



Great event, had fun and enjoyed visiting Nelson, the hospitality and atmosphere, bloody cracker day really!

Brendon, Avon



One of the most fun regattas I have been to!

Simon, North Island

