

Melges Asia Pacific

In 2006 Heath Walters introduced the Melges 24 Class to Australia. It was a big risk; there were larger, established one design classes like the Farr 40's and Sydney 38's.

At the time he was building Northshore Yachts in Australia in our Gosford factory. Heath had grown up racing one design classes on Pittwater in Sydney. In the last 80's his crew qualified to represent Australia at the J24 Worlds in Canada. He also competed in the match racing circuit the Nations Cup, the tactical knowledge and skillful crew work and racing formats appealed to Heath and he was drawn to the competitive Melges classes.

Heath had been following the success of the Melges 24 Internationally and was drawn to the design simplicity, level of competition, mobility and affordability, he considered the Melges 24 the perfect fit for Australia. Harry Melges, Melges Boat Works, invited Heath to the factory in Zenda, Wisconsin and that was the beginning of Melges Asia Pacific and a strong association. The Melges family are highly regarded in the International Sailing community and have a long and successful history in boat building and racing.

It is difficult to grow a class in Australia from scratch, but the Melges are well designed balanced boats appealing to a wide range of competitors including youth, women, families and world champions. Potential owners research the boats, relate them to their requirements and the test sail gets them hooked.

His first customer was another Heath, Heath Townsend from Western Australia. As soon as he heard the M24 moulds were coming to Australia he rang and said "I want the first boat". Once we started the Australian Association he became our first Class President and helped set the course for the future and continues to compete.

The core values of Melges Asia Pacific are creating an inclusive environment, a culture of fun, and competitive racing. Our goal was to provide an open and transparent flow of class information where the one design rules are adhered to. It is great to see teams improve as their experience in each class increases.

Heath joined forces with Chris Links in 2010 as Northshore Marine Group. As accomplished one design sailors Heath and Chris spent years developing and growing the Melges classes in Australia before establishing and handing over the administration class associations. They have since worked collaboratively with associations providing sales, service, parts and promotion to ensure successful class events including State Titles, Nationals and an Australian Melges 24 World Championship.

Melges Asia Pacific spent five years lobbying the International Melges 24 Association to include an Australian venue as World Championships host. Along with previous Australian Melges 24 class president Warwick Rooklyn executive committee member of the International class Kevin Nixon Newtack Events Marketing, Royal Geelong Yacht Club, the Victorian Government and the Greater City of Geelong successfully secured the bid in 2012. RGYC hosted the 2014 Gill Melges 24 World Championships in February off the back of the Festival of Sails. Competitors from seven Nations shipped or towed their boats to Geelong to compete in the Open and Corinthian divisions of the 2014 Gill Melges 24 World Championships.

The current Melges 24 Class President is a young, motivated and accomplished Melges 24 competitor Peter Kendall who is working behind the scenes with the Association and Melges Asia Pacific to reinvigorate the racing program post restrictions.

We have continued to evolve as new classes become available and currently have several Melges14's, Melges 20's, Melge 24's and 32's available.