

Season's Greetings from your International Etchells Class Association



New Year. New Governors.

(... and some new actions for the International Etchells Association!)

First and foremost, the IECA wishes all of you, and your families a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year. May you have a safe, and relaxing holiday time.

2018 was a wonderful, and successful year for the Etchells. In a way, this was epitomised by the magnificent turnout in October for the World Championship in Brisbane. So many people from within, and outside of the Class are still talking about it.



2018 World Championship, Moreton Bay, Brisbane AUS - © Mitch Pearson/Surf Sail Kite

2019 will see a new group of elected and appointed Governors make up the International Governing Committee (IGC) for the Etchells Class. This strong, new line-up comprises a very talented group of Etchells sailors from a diverse set of backgrounds, with a common purpose. Namely to contribute towards the promotion, growth, management, and great sailboat racing that is the Etchells!

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The IGC will be led by incoming Chairman, Jim Cunningham, from San Francisco, USA. Jim's origin with Etchells dates back 30 years to Hong Kong, and three World Championship events in the early 1990's. Jim set aside his competitive sailing for almost two decades to focus on his family, and a career in investment management. He returned to the sport, and Etchells racing in 2011, and found the racing to be as strong as ever. Since then Jim has been an active competitor on both the West and East coasts of the USA, as well as travelling to the 2016 Worlds in Cowes. Jim placed fourth at the 2017 San Francisco Worlds. He is a member of both the New York Yacht Club, and the San Francisco Yacht Club.

Commenting on his Etchells journey, Jim said "Over my own 30-year Etchells view I can say that not many fleets can boast such consistent, and high calibre competition, with truly enviable and rewarding camaraderie, over such a long period of time."

"Just look at past Worlds Champions in the Class, which includes Skip Etchells, Dave Curtis, Iain Murray, Larry Klein, Dennis Conner, Colin Beashel, Vince Brun, John Bertrand, Stuart Childerley, Ken Read, Jud Smith, Andy Beadsworth, Bill Hardesty and Steve Benjamin, just to name a few. These past Champions exemplify a broad cross-section of sailors that spans most sailing disciplines, and endeavours. This includes Olympic Medallists, multi-class World Champions, America's Cup victors, Round the World winners, and recipients of the Rolex Yachtsman of the Year award."

"I can honestly say that this melting pot of sailing excellence inside the Etchells Class excites me as much today, as it did all those years ago! Simply look to the 2018 Worlds in Brisbane, where Martin Hill prevailed in a fleet of 94 crews. This illustrates that the class is as fiercely competitive, and dynamic as ever. The equally exciting part of our story is that our winners are simply the tip of a very broad and deep membership. There are countless dedicated, equally skilled, and totally committed folks who make up the heart and soul of our Class, and many others who selflessly give up their time to volunteer, and thereby make the events as great as they are. It's a great group with a rich history, which is why we are a vibrant, active international class that spans the globe. To me, it's as simple as saying that the success, and allure of the Etchells is the boat and it's people. There is really nothing else quite like it in sailing today."



Martin Hill, Julian Plante, Mat Belcher and Sean O'Rourke cross the finish line, and secure the 2018 World Championship - © Emily Scott

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Newly appointed Vice-Chairman, Chris Hampton, has more than 15 years under his belt at the helm of an Etchells, and has rarely missed a World Championship during that time. Chris placed fifth at the recent 94-boat Etchells World Championship in Brisbane. Chris is based in Melbourne, and is an active member of the local Etchells fleet, which is based out of the Royal Brighton Yacht Club.

When asked about the make up of the new IGC, Chris said "It's wonderful to see sailors of the calibre of Steve Benjamin, Iain Murray, and Andrew Palfrey put up their hands as Governors, to assist in the revitalisation of the Class internationally. I'm also delighted to see that we have a Chairman based in the USA, which is important with the forthcoming 2019 Worlds in Corpus Christi, Texas. I have every confidence that Jim Cunningham will be a great Chairman."



Chris Hampton's Tango at Metung, Victoria - © David Jeffreys

As just mentioned by Chris, two new faces to the IGC are icons within the sport of sailing, Steve Benjamin and Iain Murray. Both are multiple World Champions, former Olympians, and boast a list of achievements dating back to the 1970's. Steve and Iain are also known for giving back to the sport. Steve assists US Sailing in many ways, including the US Olympic Sailing Team's push to the 2020 Olympics. Iain also remains heavily involved in Olympic endeavours, heading up the Australian Sailing Team. Both sailors are former Etchells World Champions, and both are currently actively campaigning to change that prefix from 'former', to 'reigning'.

Steve commented, "Since first joining the Etchells Class in 2014 we have been thrilled with the boat, the Class, and the racing! The boats point super-high upwind, and are ultra-responsive to proper tuning, and sail trim. As far as the competition goes, it is very hard to find a tougher group of competitors, and also such a fun group to race with. We really look forward to every event, especially the World Championships."

Iain Murray said, "Since stepping back from the intensity of Olympic campaigning (where he campaigned with fellow Governor Andrew Palfrey) a few years back, I missed the cut and thrust of high-end, one design racing. A couple of years ago I stepped back into the Etchells, racing in Sydney, and just loved it. Since then, I have competed in the San Francisco and Brisbane Worlds, and have had a new boat built in Australia. I am looking forward to contributing to the Etchells Class as part of the IGC, by helping to guide the progression of the class and the fleet".

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The International Governing Committee and Office Bearers from January 1, 2019 are:

- Jim Cunningham (USA) - IGC Chairman
- Chris Hampton (AUS) - IGC Vice-Chairman
- David Healey (AUS) - Treasurer
- Steve Benjamin (USA)
- Iain Murray (AUS)
- Martin Kaye (HKG)
- Cameron Miles (AUS)
- Andrew Palfrey (GBR)
- Timothy Patton (BER)
- Phil Smidmore (AUS)
- Andrew Cumming (CAN)
- Don Jesberg (USA)
- Grantham Kitto (AUS)
- Mark Roberts (AUS)

The One Design Technical Committee will continue to be led by internationally renowned Naval Architect, and passionate Etchells sailor, Bruce Nelson (USA).

The IECA would like to pay tribute to the outgoing Governors for their contributions to the Class. Our sincere thanks and gratitude go to Senet Bischoff, Argyle Campbell, David Clark, Richard Hammond, and Anatole Masfen for all of their efforts. Grantham Kitto is the outgoing Chairman, but thankfully he will continue to contribute as a Governor.

Finally then, we wish fair winds and safe sailing to our valued members who are competing in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. And we will see you soon if you are racing in the impending 2019 Australian Championship (Brisbane), or the 2019 Sid Doren Memorial (Miami) events.



Hot racing in Miami with an International fleet - © Andrew Palfrey