

YACHTING: World Fireball champs *NATAL MERCURY*

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Pinnel doesn't have things all his own way

By Richard Crockett

MOST competitors agreed that yesterday was the most difficult race so far in the Fireball world championship being raced off Durban this week, due more to the unpredictable winds than the wind strength which finally varied from 10 to 14 knots from the south east.

Despite the winds, a total abandonment of the race after half a leg, and the fact that it took five starts to get the fleet away, race officer Ross Robson again gave competitors a perfect race yesterday.

And, Ian Pinnel did not have things all his own way. "I had a good start, but got caught on the wrong side of the first beat to windward, and rounded the first buoy about 20th" said Pinnel. But this

minor setback did not appear to faze him and he clawed his way back to finish a very respectable fifth.

Highly delighted with her position today, and the fact that she pipped Pinnel on the finish line, was Heather Payne in fourth place. "We rounded the first buoy about 10th, and managed to work ourselves into fourth position. But the highlight was coming from behind Pinnel at the start of the final leg, to just pip him at the post" she said.

The men who won yesterday, having lead from start to finish

were Richard Perkins and Gareth Edwards, who have not featured in the top ten overall so far as they were disqualified in the first race after starting prematurely. Since then their positions have improved with every race, and after discarding their worst race, are a comfortable third overall, within a mere 2,7 points of second placed Heather and Chris Payne.

After four races are completed, competitors can discard their worst race, and this is when one can really see who the main contenders for the title are. Ian Pinnel and Daniel Cripps discarded yesterday's fifth place and have eight points to be in an almost unassailable position. They really only

need a top 10 finish today to secure the title and not have to sail the final race.

Just 9,7 points separates second from seventh, so there is still a ding-dong battle on for the minor placings, and the final two races will still be keenly contested.

Results race five: 1 Richard Perkins/Gareth Edwards UK; 2 Urs Schar/Ruedi Moser Switzerland; 3 Tim Rush/Jon Ward UK; 4 Heather Payne/Chris Payne Australia; 5 Ian Pinnel/Daniel Cripps UK; 6 Alec Lanham-Love/Andrew de Vlieg SA; 7 Richard Eastaugh/Linus Birtles UK; 8 Peter Cook/Andrew Batty Australia; 9 Willem Voermann/Craig Lanham-Love SA; 10 Phil Peverall/Mark Hardess Australia.

Overall after five races: 1 Ian Pinnel/Daniel/Cripps UK 8 pts; 2 Heather & Chris Payne Australia 36; 3 Richard Perkins/Gareth Edwards UK 38,7; 4 Urs Schar/Ruedi Moser Switzerland 43; 5 Craig Cobbin/Christopher Schwarz Australia 43,7; 6 Jeremy Hartley/Russel Thorne UK 44; 7 Peter Cook/Andrew Batty Australia 45,7; 8 Richard Eastaugh/Linus Birtles UK 50,7; 9 Kevin Hope/Simon Hextall UK 53; 10 Alec Lanham-Love/Andrew de Vlieg SA 53,4.