

BALANCING ACT 2

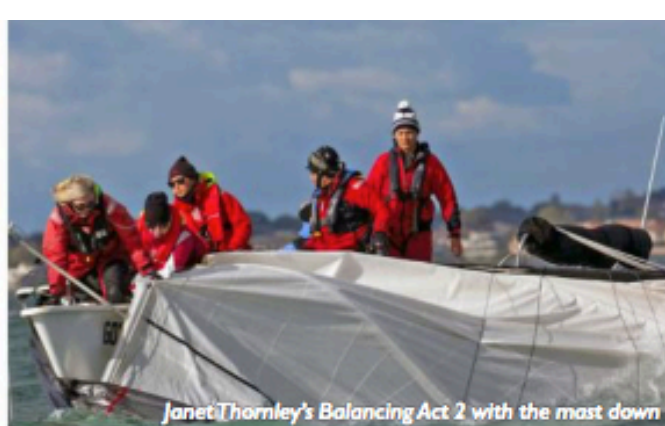
Owner/Skipper: Janet Thornley

I had previously raced in the Australian Women's Keelboat Regatta but this year *Balancing Act 2* made its debut appearance at AWKR as did my crew who were all new to what has always been for me an exciting and vibrant weekend of racing. Karen van Riet was the mainsheet hand, Claudia Larose Bell was on jib trimming, Emma Watson on spinnaker trim and pit, Tracy Dauginas in the pit and on the mast, while Olivia Henry was on foredeck and jib trim.

Unfortunately ours was not a good regatta. After some rapid wind shifts and quick maneuvering to avoid other boats at the leeward mark, in our second downwind leg of the first Saturday race, our spinnaker halyard became stuck at the top of the mast and we were unable to get the kite down. In all my time of racing this boat such a thing had never happened before. The team worked out a way of neutralizing the spinnaker so we could turn the boat round and head back to the marina, hand-furling the spinnaker to take all the air out of it then lashing it to the side stays. I jokingly told people we were half way to Tasmania before we managed to turn around. I was proud of the way we sorted this out by ourselves with the only casualty being a small rip to the spinnaker. Once back at the dock we sent Alan up the mast. Although the cause of the problem was easily identified and rectified, the halyard had jumped out of the sheave box and jammed at the top of the mast - we were unable to compete in the other two races scheduled for that day. The regatta was essentially over for us and we were all very disappointed.

Day two was uneventful for *Balancing Act 2*. Winds were about 15-20 with regular gusts over 20 knots. We sailed conservatively with a reef in the main and two-sailed it for much of the two races with the spinnaker making an occasional appearance. My aim was to finish both races without any dramas, not to break anything and to get our sailing legs. This was achieved!

Day three brought very strong winds with some carnage happening in the prestart manoeuvres. Again my aim was to just finish the race and not break anything. That of course didn't happen. We had a reef in the main and were only two-sailing it on the downwind legs. While on one of the downwind legs, without warning the rig gave way. One second it was up and the next second it was down. Luckily the mast fell forward not injuring anyone on the way down. After the initial disbelief, it was all about making sure everyone was safe and regrouping in the cockpit. Once one of the support boats arrived and we reassured them that we were all okay we went into retrieval mode. At the front of the boat I had a better view of the situation and realised that the mast had broken in two places, one spot near the top which is what would have brought the mast down and a second break where it hit the deck. The top part was under the water so I couldn't get a clear look at what had given way or broken in the first place. Unfortunately while we were retrieving the jib one of my crew sustained an injury. Her leg was in the wrong place at the wrong time and the remnant of mast bounced onto her leg and squashed it for a brief moment between mast and deck. No break, fortunately, but a big bruise gave her a sore leg for many weeks. The jib was retrieved and then we had help come aboard. Two of the 'Boat Buys' appeared with a pair of bolt cutters. Their concern was that the mast that was in the water could potentially put a hole in the boat. Everything was cut and thrown overboard. We managed to keep our boom, spinnaker pole and a few bits and pieces. My only regret afterwards was that I couldn't definitively say what brought the mast down (though I had my theories) and I lost a perfectly good mainsail. I'd like to say that I was a picture of control while this happened but the lip started to quiver and the tears started to fall when the knife went through the mainsail. Once everything was clear we headed back under our own steam to the marina. I was again proud of how my crew handled themselves. For some of them



Janet Thornley's *Balancing Act 2* with the mast down

it was the second time they had been involved in a dismasting and it brought back some traumatic memories. We were surrounded by support when we arrived back at the marina. The team from *Ocean Respect* and other fellow competitors who had also retired were all there to greet us. Lots of hugging and talking took place and I know my crew and I really appreciated it. The second wave of support came when *Clockwork* and *School's Out* came back in. To me this is sailing at its finest where the community rallies round and supports each other. A big thank you to everyone and all the Boat Buys.

Presentation occurred later that day after the race. It was a big surprise to receive an award for sportsmanship, persistence and resilience. At the time my emotions had the better of me when accepting the award but it was really appreciated. All my crew deserved that award and I wish I could have given them all a medal. They are an awesome team and I was proud to be their skipper.

Despite the carnage that we experienced at this regatta we are all keen to give it a go again next year. *Balancing Act 2* is on track to be back again for the next sailing season. The new mast is getting its finishing touches and I will be making a decision on the mainsail soon. See you all out on the water!

CLOCKWORK

Skipper: Helen Willmer

The regatta was a real buzz for the eight crew on Team *Clockwork* – a real mix of age and experience. The crew, including Amelia Clement, Christine Harvey, Sharon Lienert, Jacqui Cole, Mary Callery, Helen Willmer (helm), Sarah Buckley, Lisa Brock, Jacki Ackers and ground support Helen Kearney, all helped to keep us up there with the best! We had huge smiles for second over the line in Race One and for bringing in a 1st on Event Handicap in Race Four. Accolades must go to Bob Schahinger and his hardy crew for braving the winter elements on the trip over from Adelaide. It is the generosity of these club members that helps to grow the sport of sailing! *Clockwork* remained in Melbourne and a South Australian team was able to score a fastest time in the Ocean Racing Club of Victoria's Women's Skippers and Navigators race. Thanks also to the Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron Foundation for its generous support of our AWKR campaign.

