



Oxford Bayley, left, won the season opening Port Nelson sea swim from Hayden Squance, right, and Alec Swan. Photo: Pete Marshall



Alec Swan was third to finish. Photo: Pete Marshall.



National Ocean Swim champion Abbey Smale was the first woman to finish in Thursday's Port Nelson race. Photo: Pete Marshall.



Christina Harris was second woman to finish, taking the top spot in her F50-59 age group.
Photo: Pete Marshall

Exciting first night at sea swims

By Peter Gibbs

Nelson swimmer Oxford Bayley celebrated his 17th birthday in style, winning the opening race of the Port Nelson Sea Swim Series on Thursday.

Richmond's Abbey Smale showed she's in the mood to reclaim her national ocean swim title as she dominated the women's field.

Despite the grey skies and chilly breeze, 145 swimmers lined up at the Nelson Yacht Club, 119 choosing the 750 swim and 26 the shorter option of about 350m. Ages ranged from 10-year-old Nia Linyard to 79-year-old Derek Eaton.

The region has a core of some of the top distance swimmers in the country and it was no surprise that Alec Swan and Nic Hall were among the leaders as they set out on a triangular harbour course. National triathlon champion Hayden Squance was there too, as well as age group performers Terry Bone and Ben Marshall.

The field headed south, using moored yachts as turning points before heading back to a buoy just offshore of the finish at the yacht club ramp.

At the final mark, Oxford and Hayden were close together, but it was the younger swimmer who turned on the speed, winning by three seconds, with Alec a further ten seconds back in third.

Abbey was next to finish, ahead of Nic, Terry, Ben, then Joe Thornton, and Matt Hansen, with 57-year-old Hamish Neill rounding out the top ten.

Another 57-year-old, Christina Harris, was the second woman home, finishing in 14th overall, ahead of Ben Van Dyke, celebrating his elevation to septuagenarian status and the third woman, 13-year-old Caitlin Eden.

Brooke Swan continued from last season, winning the short race by nearly a minute from Emily Chadderton, who finished in a tight bunch just ahead of Lilly Claridge and Noah Brehaut.

Swimming continues at the Nelson Yacht Club throughout the summer.

Details and full results at nelsonseaswims.co.nz.