

## **Yachting Foundation Report**

In mid last year, the RBYC Yachting Foundation provided youth member Theo Alston with some financial support to compete in the 2025 Qingdao International Optimist Training Camp and Regatta. What follows is Theo's tales of his adventures and a letter of thanks to RBYC members for the support he received. The article first appeared in the Club Newsletter in October last year, but I thought it worthwhile to reprint here given that it highlights the positive contribution the Foundation can make to our young sailors.

### **Qingdao International Optimist Regatta 2025** by Theo Alston

My name is Theo Alston, I am 11 years old and a RBYC Junior Member. I sail an Optimist Dinghy and do Teams Racing in a Pacer. I started sailing when I was five years old in the Tackers Program at RBYC, moving up through to the Junior Racing Team. Whether I am in a briefing on shore, playing in the pond or sailing past the tower I am proud of being a Brighton member!

In September this year I was fortunate enough to travel to Qingdao, China to compete in the Qingdao International Optimist Youth Regatta! The venue was huge, with stunning views of the city, world class facilities and a sailing village with museums, restaurants and enormous conference centres. Whilst all those sounds cool, the thing that excited me the most was that I was sailing the same waters as the Olympians did at the 2008 Olympics. The same waters where Nathan Willmot and Malcom Page secured Gold in their 470! It was a challenge – the winds were constantly shifting, the tide was strong and the swell a challenge to handle.

The regatta consisted of numerous countries competing over seven days. Alongside us Opti's, the ILCA 4.7 class were also competing. There were hundreds of boats out there – the starts were tough.

The Victorian International Optimist Dingy Association sends six lucky sailors each year to represent Australia. The team for 2025 also included Mal Heale, Charlie McLaren, Aubrey Tan, Alex Sorokin and Emmanuel Gioutlou.

The Australian team was very successful!

We were lucky to have good conditions for most of the regatta – considering that that previous teams have had un-sailable conditions due to light winds. The competition was tough, with over 50 people in my fleet – after a Black Flag and some more bad luck – I recovered to 8th Spot in the Silver Fleet.

I would like to give a huge thank you to RBYC and the foundation. I would also like to thank Craig Cobbin and the RBYC coaches. You all have helped foster my love of sailing and taught me so much.”

Peter Demura  
Commodore  
Royal Brighton Yacht Club  
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