

"Ajax" flies championship pennant after her victory; team-mate Monkhouse brings runner-up "Toogara II" alongside to congratulate Barnett and his crew.

N.S.W.) and *Beryl*. Originally this event was sailed on December 30, but winner *Ajax* was deprived of victory due to the absence of a rounding mark, making a resail necessary.

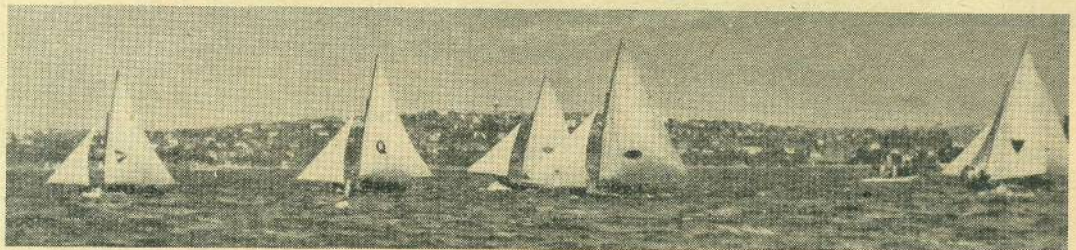
"AJAX" ALL THE WAY

A moderate nor'easter was blowing when competitors lined up for the start of the first heat on December 28. Most craft were rigged with intermediate sails, although *Mystic*, *Query* and *Viking* came out with big gear.

After an initial recall *Ajax* and *Toogara II* showed out first at gunfire, followed by *Return*, *Query* and *Estrellita*. *Yandoo* was struck off the list when her mainsail ripped from leech to mast on the starting line.

By Taylor Bay *Ajax* had established a comfortable lead from *Toogara II* and *Return* while *Query*, over-canvassed for the freshening breeze, struggled to hold

Start of third heat, with "Estrellita", "Query", "Ajax" and "Yandoo" going across, "Vortex" nearing line on port tack.



Estrellita out of 4th position. Then followed *Mystic* (E. Doran, N.S.W.), *Desire*, *Vortex* (G. Mitchell, Queensland) and *Viking*.

Positions remained much the same throughout the thrash to the Sow and Pigs rounding mark, although *Estrellita* edged *Query* out of 4th place and *Desire* moved up ahead of *Vortex*, *Mystic* and *Viking*.

Ajax strengthened her command on the square run to Shark Island and *Return* outpaced *Toogara II* to take second place at the buoy. But for trouble gybing, *Return* may have retained this position; as it was, *Toogara II* cut inside the Queensland skiff, who lost a good half-minute continuing off course until her gybe was completed.

The leaders struck patchy weather on rounding Clarke Island mark after the shy run, and it appeared for a while that *Query*, who also had spinnaker trouble at the gybe, would come well into the picture.

But the breeze freshened after a short pause, leaving

Queensland skiffers suffered their worst defeat for many years in this season's national title series on Sydney Harbor —N.S.W. rep Colin Ryrie tells the story

Ajax still in command, with *Toogara* clear ahead of *Return* and *Estrellita*.

This period of light weather proved costly to the small-gearred *Estrellita*, who dropped back to fifth, not far in advance of *Desire*, *Vortex*, *Mystic* and *Viking*, bunched in that order.

The work to Chowder Head saw *Ajax* increase her lead, rounding about two minutes ahead of *Toogara II* with *Return* still in 3rd place. *Query* was fourth, followed closely by *Estrellita*, then at intervals *Desire*, *Vortex*, *Mystic* and *Viking*.

Little change took place on the shy run to Shark Island, *Ajax* gybing for the final shy leg to the finish in an impregnable position. She flagged in well ahead of *Toogara II*, with *Return* in 3rd place. *Query* finished 4th, after a close-quarters duel with *Estrellita*.

"TOOGARA II" TURNED THE TABLES

A squally sou'easter prior to the 2nd heat on January 1 had some skippers baffled in their choice of gear, many making the mistake of rigging under-canvassed.

It was obvious at the start, when the breeze veered slightly to the east, that the boats with big gear would have the advantage. *Vortex* sported the largest sail of the fleet, while *Ajax*, *Toogara II* and *Mystic* were also under large suits. *Yandoo* was right out of the picture, with an intermediate sail and four hands, while *Viking* and *Query* tried to make up for smaller sails by starting three-handed.

Soon after gunfire the series looked like a straight-heat victory for *Ajax*. Moving very freely through the water, she jumped out from *Desire*, *Viking* and *Vortex*, with *Toogara II* leading the second bunch of skiffs.

Most skippers continued on their starboard leg out

in the strong ebb tide, while some of the tail-enders made their positions more hopeless by striking south on the port tack to free their line of wind.

At Shark Island *Ajax*, now well clear of her opponents, gybed for the run to Cremorne a good 20 seconds ahead of *Desire*, *Viking* and *Vortex*, who rounded in that order. Then came *Toogara II*, *Return*, *Mystic*, *Estrellita*, *Yandoo* and *Query*.

Ajax soon cleared out further from her opponents, while *Toogara II* moved fast downwind to take second place at Cremorne, followed by *Viking*, *Return* and *Desire*. *Query* improved her position off the breeze, closing up on the leading bunch and rounding seventh at Cremorne.

The work back to Shark Island brought about some changes. *Toogara II* sailed well to clinch her second position, while *Viking* did well for her small gear by maintaining third place. *Query* moved up to 6th, and *Yandoo* used wind and tide to advantage, closing up on *Vortex* in 8th position.