

He's only been on an RS:X board for four months but Sven Pedersen's sailing education got a major boost over the weekend.

The 16-year-old Tauranga windsurfer got to share the water with Olympic champion Tom Ashley, national champion Jon-Paul Tobin and visiting Italian representative Flavia Tartaglini at the North Island championships.

Admittedly he was starting in the second flight, five minutes behind the open men, but to see Ashley up close, zipping across Tauranga Harbour in perfect 15-knot westerlies was an undoubted thrill.

"It was amazing just to watch him on the water - you improve so much by just seeing what they do at that sort of level," Pedersen (pictured right) said.

"The other great part about it is that I live in Tauranga but it was the first time I've actually raced here.

"It was a nice change not to have to go up to Auckland and compete and it was a nice wind to sail in."

Ashley agreed. The 25-year-old cleaned up in yesterday's three races after sharing Saturday's spoils with Tobin and Aucklander Antonio Cozzolino, although Tobin had to pull out of the last two races yesterday with a broken batten.

Full Story