



Clear blue skies greeted the sailors on day five of Sail Melbourne but the heavy winds of Thursday afternoon were nowhere to be seen.

The Paralympic classes, along with the invited classes, got racing underway at 12pm in light breeze between five and seven knots. Unfortunately the wind disappeared before the afternoon's racing could begin, with the Laser, 470, 29er and 49er fleets spending the number of hours sitting on the three race courses waiting for the breeze to fill in.

When racing finally got underway the light, shifty conditions kept all the crews on their toes with close racing throughout the fleets meaning that a number of classes will go right down to the wire in Saturday's medal races.

Mathew Belcher and Malcolm Page continue to build their lead in the 470 men's class, with their win today making it seven straight, giving the Australians an eight point margin over Americans Stuart McNay and Graham Biehl.

'The wind was very variable today, the pressure was up and down and there were plenty of holes on the course,' said Belcher. 'There were a fair few shifts as the wind swung around and came of the land, suddenly you're planning along and then suddenly you're not.'

'The Americans came back at us today, we had to keep an eye on them but on the final downwind we had them in check and they didn't get any more ground on us,' he said.

Stacey Omay and Chelsea Hall made it two wins in a row over Jo Aleh and Olivia Powrie, leaving the Kiwis with a four point lead heading into the medal race.

'It's still far from over with the medal race left to run,' said Omay. 'We'll be fighting hard to get a boat between us and the Kiwis, and I'm sure they'll be working hard to stay ahead of us.'

Aleh and Powrie were happy to finally get a race in after spending a number of hours drifting around in light wind.

'We had a good battle with the Aussie girls today, there's not much between us and we'll be keeping our eye on them tomorrow' said Aleh. 'It was quite tricky on the course but we still managed to get in a good solid race.'

World Champion 49er crew Iain Jensen showed no effects from the illness which kept him off the water on Thursday as he and skipper Nathan Outteridge dominated the fleet to take two comprehensive victories. Second placed Peter Burling and Blair Tuke had a tough day on the water, with two fourth positions giving the Australians an eight point margin heading into the

final race.

'It was a long day today, we sat around on the water for two hours before heading in to shore and then back out for another go,' said Outteridge. 'The breeze was much lighter than what we had yesterday but there was a side swell out there which make sailing tricky but played to our advantage quite well.'

In the Finn class James Paterson continues to lead the class, with his two third places today giving him a seven point lead over Warwick Hill with Tim Castles a further four points behind.

The Laser Radial women's class will go right down to the wire with just one point separating Paige Railey and Marit Bouwmeester, after Bouwmeester took the honours in Friday's only race.

'There was a bit of chop today, the wind started off somewhere around 12 knots but fell away pretty quickly once we were racing, it was all about banging the left' said Bouwmeester. 'Tomorrow will be very close between Paige and I but I'm going to approach it like a normal race.'

Railey said, 'It's winner takes all tomorrow, we could play around out there and treat it like a match race but there are still eight other boats who will keep us busy.'

Clayton Johnson had a tough day with a 14th position, though he still has the Laser class lead, four points ahead of Canadian Michael Leigh with Matias del Solar third.

Peter Russell and Michael Leydon shared the honours in the 2.4m class, winning a race each. Leydon now has a slender one point lead over Canadian Paul Tingley with one race left, with Russel third overall.

2008 Beijing Paralympic Games Gold medallist Tingley had a less than perfect day, picking up two fourth positions.

'We've got one more race tomorrow so anything is possible,' said Tingley. 'Michael and I will certainly be fighting to the last tack and gybe.'

'This is my first time in Melbourne and the race has been good quality and very close. We've seen a bit of everything with the weather but it shows that the most versatile sailor will rise to the top and you have to really know what you're doing to win out there,' said Tingley.

'Today picking sides was harder than picking a broken nose,' he said.

Duncan and Peter Macgregor continue to lead the Skud 18 fleet, with a win and third place today allowing them to open up a sizeable 12 point gap back to Krista Bailey and Michael Lewenhagen in second with Daniel Fitzgibbon and Tim Lowe one point behind in third.

Fitzgibbon and Lowe have raced up the leader board since joining the regatta on Wednesday,

winning three of the five races their contested so far.

'I'm a bit rusty but definitely enjoying being back out there in the boat,' said Fitzgibbon, who hasn't sailed a Skud 18 competitively since winning Silver with Rachel Cox at the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games.

'I haven't trained since the games, taking time to recuperate and get that mongrel back, now I really keen to get back into racing and head towards the next challenge,' he said.

'The conditions today we very inconsistent and variable but if you kept your eyes out of the boat and got to the pressure lines you could get a good jump,' said Fitzgibbon.

Jessica Crisp continued her good run of form in the RS:X women's class, winning the day's race to lead Jannicke Stalstrom by eight points with Angeliki Skarlatou third. Singaporean Leonard Ong continues to be the sailor to beat in the RS:X men's, four points ahead of James Gourlay with Columbian Nicolas Lozano third.

The Laser 4.7 fleet completed one race with Stephen Collings taking the win to consolidate third position. Lloyd Collings continues to lead the class with Ella Evans second.

Jack Felsenthal leads the Optimist class by two points over James McLennan with Klaus Lorenz a further 11 points back. In the International Cadet fleet Marcus Sasson leads the way, just one point ahead of Anton and Julian Sasson with William Kelly and Joel Lay third.

Michael Williams won the opening OK Dinghy race of the day to hold down his overall lead ahead of Andre Blasse and Tim Davies.

Full results can be found at www.sailmelbourne.com.au