

President's Report for 15th August 2023

This report covers the 12month period since the last NZBAI AGM was held in August 2022.

Some the key points over the last 12 months are:

- ☐ Following the end to Covid restrictions, national blokart events were finally able to get underway again, albeit with some weather disruptions. These included:
 - A successful NZ Open and Worlds event was held in October 2022 at Sanson and Ohakea. The event was well attended by NZ sailors but disappointingly, overseas entries were fairly low, mainly due to post covid travel costs and difficulties.
 - After Cyclone Gabrielle devastated Hawkes Bay in February this year, Manawatu kindly stepped in and ran the North Island Open at Sanson in late March.
 - The Blokart Youth and Masters event was held at Ardmore Airport in April.
 - The South Island and New Zealand Opens' are coming up in October at Carters Beach, Westport and Wigram, Christchurch respectively.
- ☐ Overall membership has eased slightly this year, with Auckland and Hawkes Bay dropping numbers – both likely to one-off events. Other clubs have increased membership and pleasingly, youth membership has continued to grow – albeit mainly at Manawatu and Hawkes Bay.
- ☐ Access to good sailing venues continues to be a major challenge to the development of the sport, with several existing club venues under threat.

I discuss these points in further detail below.

Events

NZBAI has held four events since the last AGM, with a further two planned for October.

The New Zealand Open was run as the pre-event to the Worlds at Sanson in October 2022, followed a couple of days later by the Blokart Worlds at the Sanson and Ohakea Airbase tracks. A special thanks to the Manawatu Club and Blokart International for a fantastic job in very trying circumstances.

The North Island Open was to be hosted by Blokart Hawkes Bay in November 2022 but this was postponed until March 2023, due to its closeness to the NZO Worlds. Following Cyclone Gabrielle, the event was almost cancelled, but ABC and MBC kindly stepped up and offered to host it. The MBC offer to use the Sanson track was accepted, mainly based on its close proximity to Hawkes Bay.

The Blokart Youth and Masters, originally planned for July 2022 was finally held in April 2023 at Ardmore Airport – ABC had lost the use of Ardmore in 2022 but have subsequently been granted limited access again.

The South Island Open is due to be held at Carters Beach, south of Westport in mid-October – the first ever NZBAI event held on a beach. This will be a precursor to the **NZ Open**, which will be held at Wigram Air Museum, Christchurch, a couple of days later.

Despite the continued huge disruption to our sport over the last three years I would like to acknowledge the dedication and effort of the host clubs who have run a few excellent events over this period – and a very special mention to the Manawatu Club which has carried more than its share of the load.

The events subcommittee within NZBAI is responsible for managing these racing events. This subcommittee is headed by Bruce Hales. Bruce and his team have worked tirelessly to organise these events alongside the host clubs.

Communication

This year a regular NZBAI newsletter has continued to provide improved communication to our members. Thanks to Tony Unsworth for the work done in getting this newsletter released each time and providing an interesting commentary on events happening in the blokart community

A big thanks also to Nick Murray, David Gunn, & Carlo van den Dijssel for keeping the NZBAI website updated and operating throughout the year.

In addition, Tony Unsworth has done a lot of work investigating the possibility of shifting the NZBAI website to a simpler format using the Sporty platform, that could also allow better coordination with club websites. This is still work in progress.

NZBAI Membership

NZBAI Membership over the previous financial year has eased slightly, from 316 to 304, a drop of around 4% since last year.

Year	TOTAL NZBAI Members	Club	Family	Adult	Youth	TOTAL	Change in members 2022 to 2023	12 month % change
2017	215	ABC	6	34	1	41	-20	-33%
2018	220	BBC	0	29	1	30	+4	+15%
2019	257	BHB	27	42	8	77	-6	-7%
2020	265	CBY	0	45	0	45	+1	+2%
2021	281	MBC	4	61	35	100	+8	+9%
2022	316	TOTS	0	11	0	11	+1	+10%
2023	304	TOTAL	37	222	45	304	-12	-4%

All clubs except Auckland and Hawkes Bay have had small – moderate membership increases. Auckland's drop is most likely associated with the loss of Ardmore Airport last year and Hawkes Bay to Cyclone Gabrielle, that devastated parts of the region in February.

Blokart Sailing Venues

Access to good sailing venues continues to be a major challenge to the sport of blokart racing, and at this stage, it looks likely to get worse in the future.

Whilst Manawatu and Hawkes Bay have developed their own excellent track facilities, all other clubs face uncertainty:

Auckland: ABC lost access to Ardmore Airport last year and then obtained access to a somewhat challenging track at Colin Dale Park. They have since regained limited access to Ardmore but this is most likely only on an interim basis until the airport company pursues further commercial development of the land. There may be future scope to improve Colin Dale track to some extent but the pressure on land for development in Auckland is unlikely to ease any time soon.

Bay of Plenty: Blokart International's (BIL) track at Papamoa closed about three years ago and the club gained access to a smallish track in the overflow carpark at Baypark. This had been modified by the club a few years ago and access was regained when BIL entered a commercial joint venture blokart hire facility with the Council. The blokart hire operation has recently ceased and the Council are currently assessing major changes to Baypark and other recreational facilities. Club access seems OK for now but longer-term prospects are uncertain. BOP also face similar land pressures to Auckland.

Manawatu: Although MBC have a great club track at Sanson, by far the most popular racing venue in New Zealand is Ohakea Airbase. However, increased operational and security issues there mean it is likely that it will be increasingly difficult to get access to the airfield for blokart racing events.

Nelson: The commercial Vortex Karts track closed about 3 years ago and the club now does some sailing at a council netball facility, although there is no proper racing track.

Canterbury: The club's access to Wigram Airport seems fairly assured into the future, although the space available is being squeezed by the Airforce Museum's operational activities, plus adjacent land development has spoiled wind quality to some extent. A commercial operation, Velocity Karts (Ian Brown) operates a commercial hire track at Bexley and the club have sailed there on occasions, although it has limited potential as a race venue. Council land adjacent to Velocity could have future potential for the club.

The future of blokart racing in New Zealand is dependent upon access to decent sailing facilities, and it is not ideal to become reliant upon a couple of club tracks. In my view, securing access to decent sailing venues throughout the country should be our single greatest priority. Whilst we are trialling the SIO on a beach this year, that probably is not a great long-term solution.

Consequently, I implore that all blokart sailors and club committees give this matter some serious thought, keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities, and provide some creative suggestions for clubs and the NZBAI committee.

Access to sailing facilities is the lifeblood of our sport!

Committee

I would like to thank all committee members for their efforts and comradery this year. Dave Gunn and Graham Ingall, as Secretary and Treasurer have been invaluable in assuring the smooth running of NZBAI matters and made my job much easier. In addition, past NZBAI President and IBRA President, Barry Cole, remains heavily involved and a valuable asset.

Fortunately, we are losing only one NZBAI committee member this year. Nathan Monk has succumbed to work and family pressure and is stepping down after two years. I would like to acknowledge Nathan's contribution to the committee over this time.

Finally, I am hoping that someone fresher and more active in the sport will pick up the mantle and take over as NZBAI President. After eight years as Secretary and stepping in as President last year, I am now more of a social sailor and am heavily involved in several other activities and community commitments. Given the challenges that the sport is facing, I feel that someone with greater involvement and a fresher perspective as to the future of blokart racing in New Zealand, would be better to drive the organisation forward.

I look forward to welcoming any other new talent onto the committee this year.

Kind Regards

Peter McCrea
President
NZ Blokart Association