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World podium heads to Melbourne

John Bertrand AO is patron as returning champions and young crews prepare for Port Phillip

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA - The top three boats from the 2025 J/24 World Championship are entered for a rematch on Port Phillip. The Epigen J/24 World Championship 2026 will bring 202 competitors in 38 teams from 10 countries to Sandringham Yacht Club. Racing begins with an invitation race on 6 November, followed by the Opening Ceremony that evening and championship racing from 7 to 11 November.

The event's patron is John Bertrand AO, who skippered Australia II to its historic 1983 America's Cup victory and won a Finn class bronze medal for Australia at the 1976 Olympics. His involvement connects this international gathering with a landmark chapter in Australian sailing history.

Ireland's Headcase, helmed by Cillian Dickson, returns as defending champion after winning the title in Plymouth last year. Tony Parker's Bangor Packet of the United States finished second, while Kohei Ichikawa's Gekko of Japan took third. All three appear on the Melbourne entry list, where they will race alongside Australian teams such as Haywire, Checkmate and Innamincka.

The racecourse is immediately off Sandringham Yacht Club, with racing visible from the Members' Bar & Bistro. Spectators are welcome to join the shoreside festivities; some events require tickets. In spring, Port Phillip can bring variable winds, afternoon sea breezes and choppy water, particularly in southerly conditions. Crews will need to adapt their boat handling and tactical choices as the bay changes across the scheduled ten-race series.

Young sailors are part of the field too. Epigen Next Gen is being sailed by the Victorian crew that won a youth qualifying regatta in Sydney. The Dr. Turner Trophy is an award to be decided at the Worlds: it will go to the highest-placed youth entry with no crew member over the age of 25 on the first day of the event.

For some visiting crews, the regatta will be their first trip to Australia. A substantial volunteer team is preparing to welcome them and support registration, measurement, race management, safety and shoreside activities. That shared effort, and the friendships built between teams, are as much a part of the J/24 class as the competition on the water.

Pre-Worlds racing on 31 October and 1 November will end with a presentation and barbecue. Daily post-race debriefs and a lawn bowls night will bring crews together during championship week, before the event closes with Presentation Night on 11 November.

The full entry list, event information and race updates are available at j24worlds2026.com. Media can request interviews and images through the event's media page at j24worlds2026.com/media/.

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