



Luke Kelly, right, had a slight edge over Hayden Squance at the finish of Thursday night's Port Nelson Sea Swim. Photo: Janice Coyle



Sierra Thomas was delighted with her first win in the Port Nelson Sea Swim Series on Thursday night. Photo: Janice Coyle

The top two swimmers from last year's Port Nelson Sea Swim Series went head-to-head in this season's opening race from the Nelson Yacht Club last night.

It was Luke Kelly's turn, as he recorded a time of 8 minutes 38 seconds for a three-second win over last year's series winner Hayden Squance.

Things didn't look promising earlier in the day with a lot of debris in the harbour and fairly choppy seas, but by 6pm the outgoing tide had largely cleared the rubbish away, the wind had dropped and the sea was calm for the 167 swimmers who turned out.

Although the older age groups are growing, it was also noticeable that young swimmers from two of the region's squads were out in force with their coaches, preparing for the national open water swims to come later in the season.

Under-16 competitors Bendi Kepess (9.15) and Josh Sheridan (9.17) took third and fourth spots, ahead of Matai McGuinniety (9.20).

Sierra Thomas stepped up for her first win in the women's section, finishing in 9min 21sec, ahead of Sophie Alexander (9.25).

Austen Dean was eighth in 9min 30, ahead of the leading older swimmer, Terry Bone (9.37), first in M40-49 and Hamish Neill (9.48), M50-59 winner. Andrew Martin (9.51) was the next M50-59 swimmer ashore, followed in that age group by Denis Cooper (10.18).

Matthew Hansen won M30-39, finishing in 20th place in 10min 19sec.

In other age groups, Christina Harris took F50-59 in 10min 28sec, ahead of Kerry Mathieson (10.45).

Malcolm Anderson (10.42) won M60-69 in his first outing in this age group, Derek Eaton (11.49) continued his dominance in M70-79 and Ruth Thomas (11.57) and Renee Hunt (12.06) won their respective F30-39 and F40-49 age groups.

Maggy Johnston (12.37) continued her form of last summer, winning F60-69.

The short race over 400m turned into a thriller with Yegor Jones and Mark Smale going stroke for stroke and recording the same time of 6min 2sec.

They were followed by Mia Langley (6.37) and Nick Lovell (6.39).

Lauren Penney was first in the open women's section, finishing eighth in 7min 13sec.

With the club involved in promoting the Interislander Big Tahuna - Race Six in the national Banana Boat Ocean Swim Series, a free entry was up for grabs, with Glenn Roberts winning the lucky draw for a free entry in the 3km swim.

Swimming in the Port Nelson series continues every week through to March, with results and information at nelsonseaswims.co.nz.