

By Peter Gibbs

There's a tidal shift going on in the Port Nelson Sea swims standings and it's led by a large group of teenagers, most of them aged 15.

Alec Swan had a point to prove on Thursday after finishing first the previous week but being docked 10 seconds for a navigation error and relegated to second.

He made his point emphatically, sprinting to the finish to pip last year's top swimmer, 20-year-old Luke Kelly, by two seconds.

Kelly and fellow 20-year-old Hayden Squance have dominated proceedings for the past two seasons, but Swan and a further armada of teenagers have changed the rules in the last fortnight.

On a fine night, 165 swimmers were set to swim, with 132 taking on the 1km course and 33 starting in the 500m short course.

A large bunch stuck together over the first 300m, heading south from the yacht club ramp into a moderate current. Kelly found himself leading while the group took advantage of the drafting benefit tucked in behind.

As they turned right to swim out to the dolphin navigation marker, Swan began to challenge, breaking away over the leg to the final buoy, offshore from the ramp.

The group had reduced to four, with Oxford Bayley dropping off and Squance taking the wrong line to the buoy.

As they rounded the mark, with 50m to go, Swan established his position, touching down in 11 minutes 18 seconds, ahead of Kelly (11.20) and teenagers Bendi Kepess (11.21) and Fergus Drummond (11.23). Next was a group comprising Bayley (11.48), Squance (11.51) and Nic Hall (11.52).

Last summer's top female, 15-year-old Sierra Thomas (11.59) was close behind, ahead of the first mature swimmer, 46-year-old Terry Bone (12.03). Josh Sheridan (12.04) took the tenth spot.

Sophie Alexander (12.29) was the second woman, finishing in 14th overall, ahead of Zara Aydon (12.34).

The top ten females were rounded out by Ruby-Lou Stuart (12.58), Christina Harris (13.16), Abbey Smale (13.20), Flossie Van Dyke (13.35), Hannah Martin (13.47), Georgie Trengrove (14.15) and Jude Vincent (14.16).

In the short swim, Robert Sheridan came out on top, racing home in 6 minutes 59 seconds, with a gap back to Brooke Swan (7.23).

Many of the slower swimmers struggled with the current in the first leg, but there were no such problems at the front, as Mia Langley came home third in 7min 31 sec ahead of Lilly Hall (7.51), Hannah Hobbs (7.55), Fenlon Bayley (8.07), Caitlin Alexander (9.08) and Tom Perkins (9.12).

With 15 swims remaining in the weekly series, there's plenty of time for developments in the front of the field and in all the age groups, as competitors react to the changing scenery.