

MEDIA RELEASE

Wooden sculpture by Port Elliot artist to be presented to TDU stage winner

4 January 2024

A sculpture by Port Elliot-based artist Stephen Harrison will be presented as a gift to the winner of the Hahn Men's Stage 4 of the Santos Tour Down Under at the first finish held in Port Elliot in the 25-year history of the international cycling event.

The wooden sculpture 'In the Balance' portrays a sailing ship battling stormy seas and draws inspiration from local maritime history. The sculpture will be gifted by Alexandrina Council to the winner as a memento of the region.

Stephen Harrison said it was a compliment to have his work chosen as a gift for the stage winner.

"To represent Port Elliot, to have something locally-made presented to the winner of the stage which is travelling right past the gallery is a lovely compliment," Stephen said.

"My wooden sculpture portrays a sailing ship entangled in the tumultuous embrace of stormy seas. Crafted intricately, it pays homage to the vibrant maritime legacy along the South Australian coastline.

"Through its dynamic stance and the small beachcombed ceramic piece, it invites contemplation of the relationship between human ambition and the unpredictable forces of the sea, capturing the essence of daring voyages, cargoes and shipwrecks that have woven the rich history of South Australia's seafaring past."

Today Horseshoe Bay in Port Elliot is a popular tourist destination but in the late 1800s it was a notorious "ship trap" and the site of the demise of seven vessels between 1853 and 1864, including four ships in the fateful year of 1856.

Notably, the bay's shipwrecks include the Flying Fish, commemorated in the name of the local café and the signage at the Port Elliot Surf Life Saving Club.

In 1864 the brigantine Athol was wrecked and crockery from that vessel washed ashore north of Horseshoe Bay, giving rise to the haunting name Crockery Bay.

As the Tour Down Under concludes in Port Elliot, the sculpture serves as a poignant reminder of the town's maritime legacy, connecting the present triumphs of the race with the enduring echoes of a bygone era.

Stephen Harrison, known locally as 'Rocky', lives in Port Elliot and his sculpture gift was recently on display at The Strand Gallery.

The sculpture was also featured in the 2023 Wooden Boat Festival Art Trail exhibition "Alice and The Lotus". The exhibition featured paintings, drawings and sculptures by award-winning artists responding to the theme of the River and Boats.

Stephen calls himself a simple surfer, but his Port Elliot studio contains a collection of many years of art projects experimenting with different materials. His new work consists of wooden vessels where form and balance are integrated with the use of natural materials.

The Santos Tour Down Under Hahn Men's Stage 4 races through the Alexandrina Council district on Friday 19 January 2024.



Image: Port Elliot artist Stephen Harrison with his wooden sculpture 'In the Balance'. The sculpture will be presented by Alexandrina Council to the winner of the Santos Tour Down Under Hahn Men's Stage 4 at the finishing line in Port Elliot on 19 January 2024.

For further information on the Santos Tour Down Under Hahn Men's Stage 4 event in Alexandrina, visit www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au/2024TDU or visit the official website for full details at <https://tourdownunder.com.au>

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