

Mermaid sinks big guns to win Aussie Gold



MERMAID Beach AEME, a club dwarfed by some of its neighbouring powerhouses on the Gold Coast, caused a giant-sized upset to claim the men's open board relay title in a thrilling race at Maroochydore today.

Luke Cuff, James Lacy and Simon Murfet combined to claim one of the club's biggest prizes in front of a crowd screaming and shouting with excitement. Murfet brought the team home in a thrilling final leg and won the sprint to the finish ahead of Tugun's Hugh Dougherty, with Noosa Heads in third. It was Cuff who gave the team a great start, keeping up with the leaders as they set a frantic pace and getting to the beach in third place, just behind Noosa and Manly. "We've been smashing the starts all year," Cuff said. "These are perfect conditions for us at Maroochydore and we're loving it." James Lacy paddled second and took the team to the lead on the way back to the beach. Manly's Harrison Stone put in a great paddle to pull level with Lacy at the shore and the pair ran around the flags together. From there Murfet, who moved to the club from Tasmania, put in the paddle of his life but on the approach to the beach four teams – Mermaid Beach, Manly, Tugun and Noosa – were side by side and the medals were up for grabs. Manly's Jay Furniss stumbled and fell at the turning flag, leaving Murfet a metre in front of Dougherty, a margin he was able to

cling to in the desperate final sprint. Club coach Julian Norton-Smith was keeping his cool after the race but thrilled that the club had secured a rare Aussies gold medal. “A win like this is probably more important for a little club like ours than it would be for a bigger club,” he said“ Having Luke Cuff come to the club this year has been important because we had lacked an elite competitor, so this is another step in an evolution that has been going on for the past five years.” [*Click here to see Simon's sprint to bring the team home for gold \(55 seconds in\)*](#)