

## Royal Harwich Yacht Club – Spring Series

In an effort to increase series participation and allow members who aren't always able to commit to a long race series, this year the RHYC has refreshed the racing calendar. This was done by shortening the Spring, Summer and Autumn series to just 10 races – 5 weekends – and adding a 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer Series. All of the series all have discards of 50% minus 1. The RHYC'S special racing events (such as the Scatter Race, the Smugglers Trophy Open Weekend and the Bridge Race) fall during the 4 race series, to provide as much variety as possible for the club's sailors.

There was variation in the weather this year, with the racing in the first weekend taking place in plus 25c wall to wall sunshine, with the sailors being brought back down to earth the following week with 20kts of breeze and a 20c fall in temperature!

### Weekend 1

#### *Handicap*

This year's spring series was one of the most competitive the RHYC has seen for a few years, with 13 entrants and 6 different race winners throughout the 5 weekends. After the fleet dusting off their dinghies the weekend before with the club's Short Sharp Series, a fleet of 7 including two National 12s turned out to kick the spring series off.

Keen to get some training in before the Finn Masters Worlds in Spain, Will Patten (Finn) took the lead early on and won both races by a fair margin. George Finch and Lucy Homer (National 12) were able to take advantage of the gusty and unpredictable wind coming from the club shore to take second place in both races, although Dan Patten (Finn) gave them a run for their money, finishing just 6 seconds behind in Race 1 on corrected time.

However, A-Level revision meant Dan went ashore after the first race, leaving Derek Mayhew (Solo) to claim 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> race of the series. It was great to welcome new members Mark Freeman & family into the handicap fleet with their Topaz Omega, especially as crew Ben is only 5 years old!

#### *Lasers*

A fleet of 9 lasers were ready to set sail for the first weekend of 2018's spring series. It was clear that Graham Ireland had been training over the winter and took the first two bullets of the series, with Will Finch following behind and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> both races. In race 1, Tom Herring fought his way into 3<sup>rd</sup>, with Peter Richardson taking 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 2<sup>nd</sup> race.

### Weekend 2

A cold northerly wind, grey skies and an early start of 1000 didn't stop a fleet of 6 handicap boats and 4 lasers arriving to race for the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend of the Spring Series.

#### *Handicap*

Derek Mayhew (Solo) decided what many of us were thinking and opted not to race. However, Lucy Homer had the same idea, leaving George crewless. After much negotiation, Chris Mayhew managed to convince his dad Derek to crew for him in Derek's National 12, freeing up Nicole Mayhew to crew for George. The new helm / crew combination didn't stop Chris winning, although hot on his heels was Will Patten (Finn), just 3 seconds behind on corrected time. George and Nicole followed in 3<sup>rd</sup>, as Christophe Speirs and Eleanor Hensley (Wayfarer) had opted not to fly their kite due to the wind conditions.

Race 4 was in similar vein, although Chris Mayhew and George Finch started in their own match racing battle, especially on the penultimate reach where contact was made (although Nicole should have pre-empted Chris' tactics!), allowing Will Patten (Finn) to take the win, with Chris & Derek (National 12) finishing 2<sup>nd</sup>. After a 720, George and Nicole (National 12) took 3<sup>rd</sup> place, with Christophe and Eleanor (Wayfarer) following, once again opting to sail safe with no kite.

### *Lasers*

Like the handicap fleet, the weather meant that a few of the usual sailors opted to stay in bed rather than go out sailing! Graham Ireland once again took both race wins, with Tom Herring and his Laser Mk2 sail (does it make a difference?) finishing behind in 2<sup>nd</sup>. In Race 3, Dom Knights took advantage of a wobbly gybe from Will Finch to finish 3<sup>rd</sup>, but in Race 4 Dom ended up having a quick swim, allowing Will to take a comfortable 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### Weekend 3

The weather had turned again and half way through the 1<sup>st</sup> May bank holiday, sailors were greeted with almost champagne sailing conditions, although some more breeze would have been welcome.

### *Handicap*

With Will Patten competing in a local Finn open and Chris Mayhew away with the cadets, George Finch and Lucy Homer (National 12) took an early lead in Race 6. However, on the penultimate leg, an unfortunately placed motorboat sat behind them, effectively stopping the breeze getting to them. When the motorboat captain had released his error, he sped off leaving a very blue cloud of smoke behind for George and Lucy to inhale! This episode had enabled Charles Twiss (K1) to catch up and it was going to be down to the final beat to see who would win. George and Lucy took advantage of the N12's pointing ability upwind to take line honours, with Charles just behind. On corrected time, George and Lucy were 10 seconds ahead. Mark and Ben Freeman (Topaz Omega) took 3<sup>rd</sup> place, enjoying sailing in the lighter breeze.

The wind was slowly fading off for Race 7 and Charles Twiss (K1) took an early lead on the water, which George and Lucy (National 12) fought to win back, which they held until experiencing dangly pole issues at the bottom mark, allowing Charles to get ahead and sail out of the tide and in clear air. This lead continued, and Charles took the win, with George and Lucy in 2<sup>nd</sup> and Mark and Ben Freeman (Topaz Omega) in 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### *Lasers*

Graham Ireland was absent for the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend of the series as he was Race Officer for a local Finn open meeting. This enabled Tom Herring to collect two bullets and push him up the scoreboard. Will Finch and Peter Richardson were trading places, with Will finishing ahead of Peter in Race 5, but Peter sneaking ahead in Race 6. Tim Power and Rupert Negus began their own match race series this weekend, successfully ensuring Tim was 2<sup>nd</sup> last and Rupert last in Race 5. For Race 6, they continued to match race but found themselves slightly further up the fleet.

## Weekend 4

The wind forecast had been decreasing all week whilst the rain forecast had been increasing! Luckily the sailors were met with a steady breeze of 8-10kts and no rain!

### *Handicap*

George and Lucy (National 12) were able to start well in clean air and lead around the first mark but struggled to make distance off wind, with Christophe and his daughter (Wayfarer) in hot pursuit, with Charles Twiss (K1) and Derek Mayhew (Solo) also following closely. Upwind the National 12's lead increased and George and Lucy began to find themselves sailing amongst the Laser fleet! It was too close to tell on the water, but Derek Mayhew took the win, with George and Lucy just two seconds behind on corrected time – talk about close racing! Christophe took 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

For Race 8, the wind began to fade and by the final mark before the finish, the tide was stronger than the wind. A meeting with the club's Ajax fleet at this mark didn't help either and it was very tricky to find pace on the final beat. Derek Mayhew, who on the previous lap had taken Mark and Ben (Topaz Omega) on a wild goose chase up the far shore had managed to catch up considerably, but the light airs would play to Derek's advantage as the faster dinghies failed to make ground towards the line. George and Lucy (National 12) took line honours but were too close to Christophe and his daughter (Wayfarer) and Derek Mayhew (Solo) in the ~50 minute race. Derek took another race win, with Christophe in 2<sup>nd</sup> and George finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### *Lasers*

After enjoying the taste of success in the previous weekend and undeterred by the arrival of Graham Ireland in the car park, Tom Herring continued his winning streak by taking another win in Race 7, with Graham Ireland in 2<sup>nd</sup> and Peter Richardson in 3<sup>rd</sup>. The same three stayed on the podium for Race 8 but swapped their order as Peter took the race win, followed by Graham and then Tom.

## Weekend 5

### *Handicap*

It was the final weekend of the spring series and in the handicap fleet, all was to play for. If Will Patten, (fresh from the Finn World Masters in Spain during the week) turned up, he could win the series. Christophe, now on his 3<sup>rd</sup> crew of the series! – Rupert Negus (Wayfarer) could also win the series, as could George and Lucy Homer (National 12). Derek Mayhew (Solo) was in a strong position, although was at the mercy of the other competitors as it was his turn to be OOD. If all the stars aligned, Charles Twiss could also take the lead. Although handicap racing will never be as exciting as fleet racing, the previous 8 races had shown that there can be close racing! Simon Blackburn and George Bostock (RS500) had swapped from their Laser 3000 for the final weekend of the series and Mark Freeman (Topaz Omega) had decided to take the whole family out as crew for the race! The temperature was already over 20 degrees and the wind was blowing up the river at 15kts, gusting into the low 20s. What a perfect day for sailing!

George Finch and Lucy Homer started at the North end of the line on starboard and got into an early lead, until their kicker strop broke, forcing them to limp to the windward mark, with Christophe and Rupert (Wayfarer) hot on their heels. In an attempt to fix the kicker strop by 'pulling over' on the downwind leg, George and Lucy had an inevitable capsize, handing the lead and ultimately the race to Christophe 'on a plate' (Christophe's own words!). Charles Twiss (K1) finished 2<sup>nd</sup> with Simon and

George (RS500) in 3<sup>rd</sup>, after the inevitable retirement from George and Lucy and disqualification of Mark (Topaz Omega) as they forgot to sail through the club line upwind.

If it was all to play for before Race 9, it really was down to the final race. Christophe had a win under his belt, Charles had a 2<sup>nd</sup> and Derek would be getting 2.3 points for both races. Luckily George and Lucy were able to sail ashore, change to a slower (non T-foil) National 12 and get back on the water in time for the final race. They'd opted to sail on the newer N12 club handicap to keep continuity in the series.

For race 10, all of the fleet decided to start on starboard at the north end of the line. The fleet split, half going left towards the north shore with less tide, with the other half going right, with more tide against them but stronger wind. The windward mark was just in the shelter of some trees, meaning everyone experienced snakes and ladders with shifts and gusts on the approach to the mark, and the top 4 boats all rounded in quick succession! George and Lucy (National 12) sailed high after the mark to pick up speed, with Charles Twiss (K1) sailing alongside them. Christophe and Rupert (Wayfarer) hadn't managed to untwist their kite from Race 9 so were unable to fly the kite, with Simon and George also sailing with two sails in the RS500, as they haven't bought a kite yet. Charles and George/Lucy were very close, choosing to gybe at the same time, but George and Lucy managed to keep a lead and round the leeward mark first. They then took advantage of the National 12's upwind speed to cross the line into the final lap after just three tacks, whereas the rest of the fleet had to tack at least twice more. After this, Simon and George (RS500) were catching up with George and Lucy (National 12), especially after a 'classic' wobbly National 12 gybe! However, the tide had turned by the final beat and George and Lucy kept in the tide, to take line honours and a substantial win on corrected time, followed by Christophe and Rupert (Wayfarer) in 2<sup>nd</sup> and Charles (K1) in 3<sup>rd</sup>.

As the results below show, Charles and Christophe finished overall on equal points, but with Christophe's 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish in Race 10 putting him in 2<sup>nd</sup> place overall – reflecting how close the series was, with Derek Mayhew in 4<sup>th</sup>, with just 1.6 points more. George and Lucy were 1<sup>st</sup> overall, just two points clear of Christophe & Charles.

### *Lasers*

Much like the handicap fleet, the results for the top 4 sailors were very tight going into the last weekend of the series. Graham Ireland had 6 points after discards and Tom Herring had 7. Peter Richardson and Will Finch were tied in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, both on 12 points. There is no doubt this is the kind of close competition Graham Ireland thrives on and with the fantastic breeze was looking forward to the challenge. On the water, Dave Sheppard took an early lead which he maintained until the final downwind leg, where he unfortunately capsized to windward. This allowed Graham, Tom and Will to pass and finish, in that order. Will was sailing comfortably as Peter had retired due to an ongoing shoulder injury.

For the final race, David Sheppard repeated his capsizing act and Graham continued to dominate the race. This was further increased when Will Finch overtook Tom Herring, securing the overall series win for Graham, Tom in 2<sup>nd</sup> and Will in 3<sup>rd</sup>.