

Laser Radial Girls, RYA Youth Nationals, Plas Heli, 2–8 April

By Ellie Cumpsty

The Youth Nationals kicked off with beautiful sunshine and a long four-hour postponement. We had given up hope of racing that day, but the wind filled in at 3pm and we then managed to launch and do one race in around 7knts. It was very shifty and gusty so there were many gains to be made from picking the right shifts up the beat. Confusion then broke out throughout the fleet as the leaders then started going the wrong way, doing the inner loop. It took Iona Dixon, Stephanie Wingeatt and Freya Cumpsty to commit to the outer loop and drag the fleet with them. Ellie Cumpsty managed to round the wing mark in first place, followed closely by Daisy Collingridge and Wingeatt. The rest of that race was then just covering the fleet and we finished in that order. We then started a second race, but the wind decreased to the point it had to be abandoned – unluckily for Wingeatt who was winning the race by an impressive distance.

The second day had a good forecast of medium winds and Pwllheli didn't disappoint. We had a range of 8–14knts with some large wind shifts and large gusts to look out for. It often felt there was a good gust on the left side of the course. Clemmie Thompson won all three races with Ellie Cumpsty and Chloe Bar battling for seconds and thirds. There was a long postponement between the second and third race as we waited for the wind to back and the course to be moved. This different wind direction meant we had a slightly bigger sea state which made the downwind more fun with more speed differences in the fleet.

On Wednesday we all launched on time in around 20–25knts and whizzed around the start area. The Standards started their sequence but that was abandoned and we were sent in for safety reasons.

Thursday was a breezier day with a wind range of 13–19knts. Again, it was as shifty as the other days, however, there was a larger boat speed difference. It was a long day with four races. The best tactic seemed to be starting at the bias end (usually the starboard end) getting a good start with enough space so you could go into bow

down, low mode and power over the fleet. From there, it was a positioning game by making sure you were inside the next shift in relation to the fleet so you could stay ahead. There weren't really any waves to surf, but there was chop you could work with downwind, making sure the turn rate was high so you could maximize your downwind speed. It was the windiest in the third race, with a large rain cloud coming over the course from the right-hand side. From watching the Standards gain from a large right shift and pressure from the right, we could see this next race was going to be tough on our hiking legs. The wind had gone right so we had a long tack starboard, which meant we spent longer on starboard than port. By the time we started, however, there was no more shift to gain from and the pressure had evened out. This made it mostly a boat speed race. For the last race, the wind dropped and the sun came out making it more like the second day of racing. Ellie Cumpsty finished the day with four race wins with Thompson getting 2, 3, 2, 5 and Barr getting 3, 2, 3, 2.

On the last day, we launched half an hour early but had to wait for an hour on the water due to no wind and a massive left shift. Then the wind filled in nicely and we got two good races in around 10–13knts. Ellie Cumpsty won both races with Barr getting a solid two seconds. Collingridge and Thompson came third in Race 9 and Race 10 respectively.

The final positions saw Ellie Cumpsty win the event with Clementine Thompson in second and Chloe Barr in third.

Overall, it was a great week with fair racing and great conditions. The event was run well and didn't fall apart under some of the testing conditions we faced. Many thanks to Charlie Stowe for being a great Race Officer.

- 1 Ellie Cumpsty (9pts)
- 2 Clementine Thompson (18pts)
- 3 Chloe Barr (19pts)