

Noble Marine Laser Standard Spring Qualifier at Mount Batten Centre, Plymouth, 12–13 March

By Sam Whaley

A total of 38 Standards made their way to Plymouth's Mount Batten Centre for the second Noble Marine Laser Spring Qualifier. Following on from a very cold Weymouth Qualifier the previous weekend, the sailors were greeted with a still rather chilly but sunny start to the day. Unfortunately, unlike the previous weekend the wind forecast for the day looked dire with a serious lack of wind, something which turned out to be largely accurate with a postponement to racing soon going up. After waiting for a few hours, the situation never really improved and the decision was made to cancel racing for the day based on a good forecast on the Sunday.

Sunday dawned to a lack of wind. However, many sailors were caught out when Race Officer Ken Falcon decided to send the fleet out anyway to be ready for when the wind filled in. After 'drifting' around in the direction of the race area for half an hour some wind finally filled in and the fleet made it out ready for the first race to start.

Race 1 started promptly and it was the boats who started near the middle of the line who came out the best. Elliot Hanson, Micky Beckett, Jake Farren-Price and Sam Whaley were all battling it out for the top four when near the top of the beat a big right shift allowed Jack Wetherell and Lewis Smith to leap up into the mix. Hanson, however, had made the most of the right shift to have a considerable lead by the windward mark, followed by Jack Wetherell and Whaley. The tight reach and the downwind allowed Beckett to leap into the battle for second before the next beat. First around the windward mark for the last time was Hanson followed by Beckett, Jack Wetherell and then Whaley and Farren-Price. On the final downwind Farren-Price managed to nip inside of Whaley with the top five finishing order being Hanson, Beckett, Jack Wetherell, Farren-Price and then Whaley.

Race 2 brought even shiftier conditions with larger pressure differences across the course. Once again, the leaders came from the middle left with Oliver Davenport putting together the best beat to round the windward mark first closely followed by Henry Wetherell, Jack Cookson and Elliot Hanson. Hanson then received a yellow flag allowing Lorenzo Chiavarini to climb into fifth place on the downwind. On the next upwind, Henry Wetherell managed to play the shifts to overtake Davenport whilst brother Jack Wetherell worked the left-hand side well to move up into third place. On a tight final downwind before the finish, Jack Wetherell managed to get past Davenport, giving finishing positions of Henry Wetherell first, followed by Jack Wetherell, Davenport, Chiavarini and Matt Whitfield in fifth.

Race 3 and once again Henry Wetherell managed to play the shifts perfectly to lead round the windward mark. With the breeze building, the race turned more into a hike off with Olympic

representative Nick Thompson moving into second place. The race finished with Henry Wetherell first, Thompson second and Jack Wetherell, Chiavarini and Beckett finishing the top fifth.

The fourth and final race was then started with Chiavarini making the best of the first beat to round the windward mark in first. With the Wetherell brothers locked in a bit of a match-race with each other, Thompson took second place whilst Hanson and Beckett took third and fourth. Youth sailor Joe Mullan sailed a good race to finish in fifth.

Overall, Henry Wetherell took his first Qualifier win, with brother Jack Wetherell second. Chiavarini took third overall whilst Hanson was fourth and Beckett fifth overall. First youth sailor was Jamie Calder in ninth place overall. Thanks to everyone who helped make the weekend run smoothly and put on excellent racing on Sunday.

Results:

1 Henry Wetherell, 8pts

2 Jack Wetherell, 8pts

3 Lorenzo Chiavarini, 9pts

Full results:

<http://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/showrace.asp?EventID=83&RaceURL=%5Bresults%5D/plymstd.2016nh.html>