

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

By Georgina Povall

The second Qualifier of the year was held at the Mountbatten Centre in Plymouth with a light to medium wind forecast for the weekend. A smaller fleet than usual (59 sailors were entered) meant we would race in one fleet and on Saturday morning all the sailors and boats were rigged and ready to race. Unfortunately, a lack of wind meant everyone was left waiting around under an indefinite postponement, and although the wind did start to fill in by mid-afternoon, the wind recordings on the water were not consistent enough to lay a course and racing was abandoned for the day at 2.30pm.

The forecast for Sunday was much better and we were expecting around 7kts building to 14kts in the afternoon which meant we were all a bit surprised to arrive at 9am to see a flat windless Plymouth harbour! Despite this, the Plymouth volunteers and locals insisted there was 15kts out in the bay and encouraged a lot of sceptical unrigged sailors that they should be changed and launching. After a slow drift out to the race course with the tide, around 8-10kts did fill in just as we reached the start line. There was a significant amount of tide coming across the course and pushing the boats downwind meaning transits at the start were key to being first row and not caught in the line sag. Race 1 start got away first time with the pin end looking slightly biased which Ali Young took advantage of by tacking onto port along with the surrounding boats a few moments after the gun. However, a right shift and a line of pressure on the right not long after meant that most boats tacked back onto starboard and those who had started at the Committee Boat made considerable gains on the rest of the fleet as the pressure never reached the left. This set the pattern for the day with the pressure slow moving and generally one or two shifts per beat on the inner loop. Dominic Hall, Eloise Tanguy and Gethin Owen all sailed strong first beats staying in the pressure on the right and in clear air to round the windward mark in the leading bunch and with a few position changes up the second beat they finished first, second and third respectively.

By Race 2 the wind had built slightly and most of the sailors were aware of the tide and possible gains to be had on the right of the course. Despite the tide pushing the boats away from the line, the Radial fleet still managed to get a general recall in Race 2 so Ken, as expected, put up the black flag. Luckily, no one was caught out at the second attempt and shortly after the start most boats were on port heading out to the right side of the course. First around the windward mark was Young who held that position until the finish followed by a battle for second and third by Emmett and Clementine Thompson.

The temperature had dropped a few degrees by Race 3 and the wind at 12–14kts meant the pressure was a bit more even across the course. The boats that started near the pin and held for a few minutes before tacking came in strong at the windward mark as the pressure held on the left with Ed Higson and Oliver Blackburn leading the Radials. For the first time that day, we were on outer loop which seemed to have more frequent shifts than the inner loop. This allowed Young to gain on Blackburn and Higson and, after the final run, take first place to win the Qualifier. Blackburn followed closely behind to take second followed by Higson in third which was enough for a second place finish overall. Third overall was Clementine Thompson and first Youth was Ben Whaley in fifth. In 36th was Eleanor Poole who finished as first Junior.

On behalf of the Radial fleet, a big thanks to all the Mountbatten staff and volunteers who helped with the launching, tallying and organization of the event. Especially to those who moved all the trolleys between the slipways due to the low tide when the Lasers came in on Sunday.

Results:

- 1 Ali Young, 2pts
- 2 Edward Higson, 8pts
- 3 Clementine Thompson, 9pts

Full results:

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