

Noble Marine Laser Standard Qualifier, HISC, 14–15 October

By Jake Farren-Price

The second of the Autumn Qualifiers returned to Hayling Island SC last weekend, with the Laser 4.7 ladder running alongside making for a crowded beach but lively atmosphere, even if the weather was mostly overcast. Conditions were consistent over the weekend with wind direction averaging 200 degrees at 6–10knts. Slower oscillations on the Saturday gave way to quicker shifts on day two. The Standards got their fair share of starting practise with an average of three recalls or postponements during the starting sequence for every race – in large part due to the need to correct heavy line biases.

In the first race, the RO set a square line after a few misfires. Mark Lyttle came off the pin end on port and Jack Cookson had the best start at the starboard end with the majority of the fleet. Lyttle ended up tacking underneath Cookson and heading to the left. With the right looking good up the first half of the beat, Dan Whiteley banked the gain and made his way over to cover the rest of the fleet on the left. A major left shift prompted Cookson and Anthony Parke to tack, propelling them into the lead around mark one, with Lyttle and Whiteley close behind. After the first beat, the race became a procession with few place changes aside from the second beat, where both sides came in strong if played well. Cookson held his nerve to secure the win, with Parke and Whiteley second and third respectively.

In the second race, a slight pin-end bias saw Parke win the pin with Jake Farren-Price just to windward. Jamie Calder was first to tack out, with Whiteley and Cookson punching out below. Cookson was first to the windward mark, closely followed by Whiteley, with the bulk of the fleet rounding within 30 seconds. The wind perked up on the downwind leg giving the sailors more to work with in the waves and gains or losses were made. Whiteley took the win on this one, with Cookson and Parke following.

The final race of the day saw a heavily starboard-biased line. Soon after the start, the wind went left, prompting Cookson, Whiteley, Farren-Price and Lyttle to tack out, followed by the rest of the fleet who then held on almost until the starboard layline waiting for a right shift. Whiteley was first to the top mark, closely followed by Cookson, Farren-Price and Lyttle. On the downwind, Farren-Price managed to slip ahead, with Whiteley close behind going into the second beat. At the second top mark, Whiteley's upwind boat speed put him just ahead of Farren-Price, who then picked up a yellow flag dropping him back to fourth. Whiteley won with Parke and Cookson making up the top three. Whiteley recorded the best scoreline on day one with two bullets to his name, and Cookson stormed the starts and first beats rounding the windward in first, first and second.

On the second morning, there was more chop and swell coming through from the gale overnight. The first race proved that playing the right-hand side up the first beat was the winning strategy. Even so, the fleet was bunched at the top mark, with the top three of Whiteley, Cookson and Parke fighting it out but Whiteley showing his class to win another bullet.

Race 5 saw a group of five tack off immediately from the rest of the fleet, who struck out to the left. Cookson led on the right and Whiteley on the left, with Joe Woodley in hot pursuit. When the two groups came together at the top, there was not much separating them. Tight racing followed all the way around with Whiteley creeping ahead again, and Farren-Price making good gains on the right gate going downwind and level with Woodley going into the second beat. A left shift towards the top of the second beat brought the chasing pack, led by Parke and Calder, into contention. Down the run, it was surfing conditions, but Cookson was yellow flagged dropping him to seventh. Farren-Price secured second, with Parke, Woodley and Calder close behind.

Whiteley went into the final race having already won the weekend after a magnificent performance, and he underlined his dominance with another win. Woodley sailed well to secure second, to add to his three fourth places. A big battle on the final downwind for third between Parke and Cookson decided who came second overall on countback. It came down to the last mark, with Parke rounding after Cookson, followed by Farren-Price and Mullan. In all, a great weekend of tight racing. Thanks to the RO, Dot and HISC for hosting a memorable Qualifier.

Results:

- 1 Dan Whiteley (5pts)
- 2 Jack Cookson (12pts)
- 3 Anthony Parke (12pts)

Full results at:

<http://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/showrace.asp?EventID=97&RaceURL=%5Bresults%5D/hiscstd.2017nh.html>