

## **Noble Marine Laser Autumn Qualifier, Royal Norfolk and Suffolk YC, 13–14 October**

### **Standard by Sam Whaley**

A modest fleet of 26 Standards assembled up in Lowestoft, Norfolk, for the second Autumn Noble Marine World and European Laser Qualifier. With a reasonably scary forecast of 25–38knts, there were definitely a few scared sailors in the boat park. However, with the wind only sitting at 12–16knts, the Race Committee sent everyone out on time anyway.

Race 1 started in glamour conditions, 12–17knts and big waves. Jack Wetherell made the best of the first beat to lead. However, he got overhauled on the following downwind to hand the lead to Elliot Hanson. A big split on the second beat saw him once again regain the lead, which this time he never lost, whilst Hanson took second and Lorenzo Brando Chiavarini third.

In Race 2, Hanson had a great first beat to lead around the top mark, followed by Ben Flower who was sailing remarkably well. Sam Whaley moved into second at the gate but got destroyed by a huge wave upon rounding and allowed the rest of the team to zoom past at the other gate. Hanson sailed well to win the race, with Micky Beckett second and Nick Thompson third.

In Race 3, it was Micky Beckett who nailed the strategy on the first beat to lead by miles, followed by Jake Farren-Price. With the tide in full flow now, some huge waves were breaking over the leeward marks, which was unfortunately placed on a very shallow sandbank. Despite the slightly decreased wind now, multiple people wiped out and some were even standing up! Micky Beckett comfortably won the weirdest and most confused race ever witnessed at a Qualifier, with Nick Thompson second and Jack Cookson third. The carnage wasn't over quite yet as sailors had to sail through some choppy waters on the way home, with Sam Whaley winning the muppet of the day award after snapping his rig in two after getting mowed down by a particularly large wave.

Although day two brought another windy forecast, sailors were again left disappointed with the apparent lack of wind. After a short postponement onshore for the wind to fill in, the fleet launched in some much smaller breaking waves.

In the first race, Joe Mullan rounded the windward first with local Joe Drake second. A good call (local knowledge?) from Drake at the gate meant he shot into the lead and headed for the shore first. However, in the 15-minute duel along the shoreline, it was Chiavarini who emerged on top, followed by Micky Beckett and Elliot Hanson. With the wind rapidly decreasing to under 5knts, the fleet barely made it around the windward mark before the tide got too strong. No wind meant not much overtaking and the positions stayed the same.

After a big delay and some faffing from the sailors when almost the entire fleet boycotted the last race before losing confidence and sailing back to the start, Race 5 got underway in 8–12knts. Joe Drake,

once again, picked some good shifts and tide to comfortably lead around the first mark. Ben Childerley and a few others also had a cracking beat to be in top positions. However, on the second beat and last downwind, Chiavarini moved up into second with Jack Cookson again claiming third.

Overall, Micky Beckett won, even though he didn't sail the final race, with Lorenzo Brando Chiavarini second and Nick Thompson third. First Youth was Joe Drake in sixth place.

*Results:*

- 1st Michael Beckett (9pts)
- 2nd Lorenzo Brando Chiavarini (11pts)
- 3rd Nick Thompson (15pts)
- 6th (First Youth) Joe Drake (27pts)

*Full results:*

<https://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/showrace.asp?EventID=105&RaceURL=%5Bresults%5D/lowestoftstd.18nh.html>



*Launching in the waves. Photo: Ed Sunderland*

**Radial by Ben Elvin**

Unseasonably warm air and a strong southerly wind greeted the 60-strong Radial fleet who made the trip to the easternmost point of the UK for the second of the Autumn Qualifiers. The forecast 30knts of

wind didn't materialize and, despite some worryingly large waves breaking on the gently shelving sandy beach, the fleet was released promptly to start racing in the steady 20knt breeze and very tidal race area.

It's traditional in the Radial fleet to have a token start without the black flag before several recalls with it, but to the surprise of quite a few sailors who were expecting a number of practice starts with the tide ripping upwind, the first start went and the fleet was off racing.

With a stable breeze, the first upwind was a drag race with the usual high-wind specialists pulling clear. Ali Young and Hannah Snellgrove held their lanes from the line out on the left, while Ben Elvin worked his way up on the right after tacking out of a messy lane at the Committee Boat end. When they all converged at the top mark, Snellgrove and Young held a small advantage, with Elvin rounding close behind. Despite the strong breeze, the large waves were difficult to hook into and there were large gains and losses to be had if you got them right or wrong. A light touch on the tiller and choosing the right moment to sail large angles was the secret, and Young and Elvin seemed to pick it up more quickly, arriving at the gate in first and second. Young adopted a loose cover on Elvin for the second beat and that's how the race ended, with Young holding off Elvin until the finish and Snellgrove coming in third.

At the start of Race 2, the tide was beginning to turn downwind and there were big strategic decisions to be made. Either heading for the beach, which was close on the right, or crossing the channel early and using the bank on the left was going to pay and the sailors had to commit to a decision. The majority of the fleet opted for the beach, but it turned out to be fairly even, with Young and Snellgrove leading from the left at the top mark. The rest of the fleet, including Elvin and Daisy Collingridge who had opted for the 'middle right' strategy, were close behind. By the time the fleet entered the second beat, the tide was running more strongly and the leaders opted for the beach, working their way up to the starboard layline. However, local (ish) sailor Georgina Povall and visiting Irishman Jamie McMahon proved that it was the wrong choice by heading out to the left and making their way upwind over the sandbank to arrive at the second windward mark in third and fourth. The shallow water over the bank on the last downwind provided occasional breaking waves, one of which picked up McMahon and flipped him over, dropping him to fifth. At the finish, Young held off Snellgrove, with Povall taking third.

For Race 3, the tide was at full power, pushing the fleet backwards at over 2knts in the channel. With the wind having dropped significantly down to 10–12knts, it was set to be a long slow upwind. Elvin recognized the danger presented by the tide and waited for the start on port close to the pin end. It proved to be a winning strategy as the fleet struggled to judge the layline correctly with many boats not making it. Elvin tacked around the pin at the gun and headed for the shelter of the bank on the left, followed by Young, Povall and Snellgrove. Initially, the boats on the right looked good as they headed for the beach, but when the boats on the left arrived over the shallower water, it quickly turned

around. The upwind was a long game of playing chicken with the large breaking waves because the further over the bank you headed the more shelter you could get from the tide, but also the bigger the waves that would try and break on your boat. After a 30-minute struggle upwind, Elvin finally arrived at the first mark. Snellgrove and Young were close behind, having overstood by heading to the wrong mark, but gaining from having done so as the shelter from the tide was such a strong factor. Many struggled with the rounding in such strong current and there were a few small pile ups to be seen, but thankfully, the fleet only had to do it once with the race being shortened at the bottom, giving Elvin the bullet, followed by Young and then Povall who had worked her way past Snellgrove on the downwind.

Sunday dawned with significantly less wind and a tricky looking forecast involving a cold front, rain and a multitude of wind directions. After being held on shore for a while under postponement, the Race Officer decided there was just enough northerly wind to start racing and released the fleets. With a strong tide going downwind and the breeze looking unstable, it was always going to be difficult, but it gave a chance for the lighter wind specialists to have their fun with Monica Mikkola taking a healthy lead on the first beat of Race 4 and Matilda Nicholls, who was first Youth Lady overnight, coming in strongly by the first mark, The first run was over rather quickly given the strong tide and it was back into the upwind. Unfortunately, the breeze started to shut off and only Mikkola was able to make it around the windward mark again before it died completed and the fleet start drifting backwards towards the start. The race was abandoned, and after a short while the wind filled in more strongly from the north west and the course was re-laid.

A couple of recalled starts led to the first black flags being handed out before racing could get underway, when the sharp end of the fleet opting for the pin and holding to the left. With the wind blowing off the land it was important to be able to tack and head for pressure, so boats who opted for the more conservative strategy of a mid-line start were able to capitalise. It was Irish Youth sailor Jamie McMahon who made the best of the first beat, followed by Tom Mitchell and Dan McGaughey also coming in strongly. Jon Emmet had managed to find a route to the middle of the course from the pin and was in hot pursuit of the leaders.

On the second upwind, a large patch of pressure moving in from the right led to gains for Elvin and Clemmie Thompson, who headed out into it and came in fast on the starboard layline. On the downwind, Elvin worked a gust coming down the right to briefly take the lead before picking up a yellow flag, allowing McMahon to hold until the finish to take the bullet, followed by Emmett and then Mitchell.

With the 2pm time cut-off long gone, there was no more racing allowed and the fleet headed in for a quick pack up before the rain came in.

*Results:*

1st (First Lady) Alison Young (4pts)

2nd (First Master) Ben Elvin (7pts)

3rd Hannah Snellgrove (9pts)

6th (First Youth) Jamie McMahon (16pts)

12th (First Youth Lady) Matilda Nicholls (37pts)

*Full results:*

<https://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/showrace.asp?EventID=105&RaceURL=%5Bresults%5D/lowestoftrad.18nh.html>