

A lot of weed at the Laser Masters Europeans in Brittany

10-15 June 2017. Fouesnant, France.

Swirling thermal winds and variable currents in the bay of Fouesnant, on the Atlantic coast of Brittany, on the first day of the Laser Masters Europeans left several sailors looking for something that might calm them down. On returning to the shore competitors were greeted with wonderful Breton hospitality in the form of apple juice, crepes and galettes.

An executive meeting was convened and the decision made to hold subsequent races in the mouth of the bay, where the (light) prevailing south westerly winds had a clearer path to the competitors. While the winds were steadier another challenge emerged in the underwater form of weed. Regular dagger board lifting and rudder checking became imperative. Once these skills were mastered some very close racing took place in the steadier winds with tiny differences in boat speed, directioning and positioning making all the difference.

The final, deciding day of racing was held back in the bay, close to the shore, with puffing thermal winds and no weed!

Radial fleet

The 95 boat radial fleet was a real test of inner tranquillity, light wind boat handling skills, consistency and big fleet starting ability. British sailors were, as in Croatia last October, dominant, but with different faces on the top steps of the age category podiums.

Ian Jones' vegetarian diet either allowed him to make his own wind or his recent withdrawal from the regular 9-5 employment gave him the tranquillity needed to win the radial fleet overall and be 1st Master. A fantastic achievement,

particularly given that laser legends Steve Cockerill (1st Grand Master) and Jon Emmett (1st Amateur Master) were second and third respectively. Ian Gregory in fourth overall (2nd Master), might have felt a little hard done by with three overall firsts, but was happy to have nudged ahead of Italian Master Alessio Marinelli overall, on a tie break.

It wasn't just the overall podium that had a strong odour of (vegetarian) roast beef about it, with British Sailors taking the top slot in all categories in the radial fleet except the legend (over 75) category. That was won by the evergreen, ex Eastern European (now USA resident) Peter Seidenberg. He was one place behind a newly refurbished and very welcome returner to International Masters radial sailing, Mike Kinnear who took the Great Grand Master Gold Medal.

Class legends were in abundant supply in both fleets. Keith Wilkins, John Reay, Kevin Pearson, Mike Pridham, Richard Major, Rob Cage (9th overall), Max Hunt and Terry Scutcher didn't find their way onto winners podiums this time round, such was the strength and quality of all fleets. Ladies Grand Master competitor Ann Keates was a highly creditable 12th overall, which ranked her as the second lady in the regatta behind Spanish Olympic representative (2008) Monica Azon (6th overall). British ladies Great Grand Master, Hilary Thomas, a long-term stalwart of the fleet, brought a new knee to the regatta, which seemed effective. Glynn Purnell sported a set of enlarged biceps, which unfortunately acquired a mind of their own, pushing his start watch button a minute early for the last (black flag) race start.



EurILCA 2017 European Laser Master Championships- Fouesnant-France

Standard Fleet

Long start lines and shifting winds meant that the 67 boat standard fleet often had a 'busy' time at the biased end! U flags proved relatively ineffective and were frequently switched to the old school black version.

The Spanish standard sailors posted the strongest results. Fielding a crop of Olympic medalists from past years, they finished with three boats in the top 10 overall. Carlos Martinez was the run away over-all winner and 1st Master, with a mighty impressive set of results given the variable conditions.

Unsurprisingly the French were the largest fleet, as host nation but the Brits were the next biggest national group with 13 in the standard fleet. Our very own Alan Davis finished 3rd overall and Tim Law 6th ranking as 2nd and 3rd Grand Masters. Alan's performance was particularly strong in a typical never-say-die manner as he managed to spank both his discards on the first day with a BFD and a 23rd! Never count the man out as he produced a very consistent regatta from then on to make the podium.

Peter Shewin was very solid throughout the week to take 15th overall and 3rd Great Grand Master including an overall 4th and 3rd on his score card. There were other flashes of quality from the GB fleet with Richard Pratt, Michael Hicks and Dave Freeman scoring single figure results during the week but lacking the required consistency. Dave finally woke up scoring two 2nds on the final day only to be OCS in the last. Neil Peters was in a firm 4th in race 8 when his second yellow flag added to two BFDs put pay to this event. The adage "Must try harder" just doesn't apply!



Super Brits:

The truly international fleet included saw 18 different countries represented including Mauritius, the USA and Dominican Republic. Of the 29 podium medals awarded, across both fleets 10 went to GB boats. That made the GB travellers, by some way, the most successful team at a well organised and great fun regatta. Hopefully this talented bunch of sailors will all maintain their British nationality post Brexit!

Overall results:

Radial: 1st Ian Jones GBR (1st Master), 2nd Steve Cockerill GBR (1st Grand Master), 3rd Jon Emmett GBR (1st Amateur Master). 22nd Mike Kinnear GBR (1st Great Grand Master)

Standard: 1st Carlos Martinez ESP (1st Master), 2nd Rik Wolters NED (1st Grand Master), 3rd Alan Davis GBR (2nd Grand Master). 5th Wolfgang Gerz GER (1st Great Grand Master).



For full results go to: <http://www.sailinfo.fr/lemc2017/indexR.html>