

Noble Marine Laser Spring Qualifier, Mount Batten Centre, Plymouth, 23–24 March

Standard by Jake Farren-Price

The final Laser Spring Qualifier saw a more moderate forecast from the previous weekends, with average wind speeds hitting single figures at times. This meant all six races were completed and we got sailing on both days. There were 22 Standards battling it out this weekend in what was expected to be a high-scoring regatta, with an offshore breeze trying to figure out its route over the hills.

The first race saw a pin-end biased line. Sam Whaley executed this well, meaning he was the first to a new band of pressure and left shift on the left-hand side of the course, which slowly filled to the rest of the course. The size of this shift meant a lot of the people on the left ended up reaching into the top mark, well over the layline, after hardly sailing any starboard. After this, due to the wind being offset, it was a bit of a procession and there were not many place changes. Whaley held the lead, with Jack Cookson and Joe Mullan following respectively.

Race 2 was still pin favoured and, after seeing the power of the left in the first race, the pin end was much more packed. The best start came from Joe Mullan because he held out to the left, patiently waiting for the right time to cross the fleet. Towards the top of the beat, it became very patchy and boats only metres apart could be in completely different wind. Ben Flower managed to round the mark first but with much of the fleet in close proximity. Jack Wetherell sailed the next few legs very well to get up into a close match for first between him and Daniel Whiteley. On the final downwind, Whiteley was pipped to the finish line by Wetherell.

The final race of the day saw the strength of the tide start to decrease and some more right shifts come into play. The leaders at the top mark came from the right. Joseph Drake capitalized on this to round the mark with a clear lead. He held this all the way round very well, considering a very shifty second beat. He was followed by Jack Hopkins and Whiteley. After the end of the first day, it became apparent the winner of this event was going to be the person who made the fewest mistakes. There were some mixed results across the board and some people in need of a discard.

The second day got underway after a short postponement, with the breeze around 90 degrees further left from the previous day but just as shifty. Up the first beat, it was the sailors who played the right-hand side who came out on top. Wetherell and Whaley were amongst these. The breeze was starting to build, making huge differences across the course between the gusts and the lulls. Wetherell sailed well to secure his second win of the event.

In Race 5, there was more breeze down the left-hand side of the course and the people who played that side came out ahead, Dan Whiteley did the best job of this and rounded the top mark first. Down the run, there were some place changes as people got stuck in lulls and couldn't get out. Up the

second beat, Jack Cookson played the right very well to catapult him up the fleet and into second. Whiteley held onto first, with Cookson following and Wetherell in third.

For the final race of the event, it was all to play for at the top. Half way up the first beat, the race was abandoned as the left shift and extra breeze made it unfair. However, we got away again quickly. The left-hand side played very well, and all the top boats were in close contention around the first mark. The downwind saw a few place changes, but the breeze was coming down both sides so there was nothing too catastrophic. By the final downwind, Wetherell was in close pursuit of Whaley, followed by Cookson and Whiteley. The win was still up for grabs, and by the bottom mark, Cookson had just scraped ahead of Whaley to secure the win. Over the whole weekend, it was Jack Wetherell who sailed the most consistently to come out on top.

Results:

1st Jack Wetherell (16pts)

2nd Daniel Whiteley (19pts)

3rd Sam Whaley (21pts)

Full results: <https://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/index.asp?EventID=112>