

Noble Marine Laser Autumn Qualifier, South Shields SC, 22–23 September

Standard by Jack Wetherell

A strong fleet of 22 Standard Laser sailors were greeted with a chilly start to the 2018 Autumn Qualifiers. South Shields SC hosted the first event of the qualification series for the 2019 Laser World and European Championships.

Saturday provided easterly winds coming directly off the land, resulting in a shifty and gusty day. With Race 1 away cleanly, Elliot Hanson made the best use of the shifts up the first beat, closely followed by Michael Beckett and Jack Wetherell. With the Race Officer opting for a trapezoid course, the fleet set off on the long reach to the outer loop. Hanson stayed high looking for more wind, while Beckett opted to dive low in the gusts. Both got stranded and it was Wetherell and Lorenzo Chiavarini who linked the gusts the best to be first and second at the next mark. However, Wetherell and Chiavarini were left with a difficult decision approaching the gate. Neither mark looked biased, but the gate buoys were acres apart creating the option for lots of early leverage. The duo selected the go-left gate and never looked back, with Wetherell winning and Chiavarini coming home in second. Beckett sailed well to finish third, Hanson fourth and current Laser National Champion Sam Whaley was fifth.

For Race 2, the gusty nature of the 10–18knt breeze persisted. Hanson, again showing his upwind speed, was first around the windward mark, closely followed by Chiavarini. The two battled downwind, and with a very close leeward mark rounding, it was impossible to tell who would come out on top. But the huge gate came in to play again! Beckett had gained a lot on the downwind and split at the gate. After less than a minute of the second upwind, Beckett had hooked in to the same pressure he had come down the run in and moved into a commanding lead. Beckett never relinquished the lead, Hanson came home second, Jack Cookson played the second beat nicely to finish third, Chiavarini dropped to fourth and Wetherell was fifth.

Race 3 saw Wetherell and up and coming sailor Ben Flower lead around the windward mark after grabbing a big left shift upwind. Wetherell extended on the following reach and run with Flower getting pulled in by the charging chasing pack. Beckett moved in to second and selected the same gate mark as Wetherell, but this time, the opportunity was there for Hanson and Dan Whiteley to make the split at the still massive gate. Hanson and Whiteley got the shift right and gained tremendous amounts moving in to second and third at the windward mark, with Wetherell's lead cut to half a boat length. The three boats had a good tussle down the final run, with Hanson gaining a crucial boat length on Wetherell to take the win. Whiteley finished third but found he had been over the start line. Beckett, Chiavarini and Joseph Mullan finished off the top five.

With the temperature down to a striking 8 degrees!! Sailors launched for the second day of the event. After a wait around for some stable wind, a northerly wind settled and three races were completed. Race 4 was tight at the top, Sam Whaley showed everyone how it is done to lead around, closely

followed by Chiavarini. Chiavarini applied pressure throughout the race and cracked Whaley on the second beat. After that, Chiavarini never looked back, taking the first win of the day. Whaley had to settle for second, Hanson was third, Whiteley in fourth and Jack Cookson fifth.

Race 5 started with Hanson and Wetherell well ahead on the first upwind going tack for tack. Hanson came out on top with Wetherell second at the windward mark. They then blasted off on the top reach. Beckett was third around and, with the bit between his teeth, passed Wetherell on the downwind and got right up to Hanson's stern. The top three positions stayed the same after that. Cookson finished fourth and Whiteley fifth.

The final race started just before the time limit with the points very close. Hanson on 7, Beckett on 9, and Wetherell and Chiavarini both on 11. Beckett executed a perfect race with a great start and by digging hard in to the first shift took the race win. Whiteley was second around the windward mark, closely followed by a tight group. Chiavarini was turbocharged on the first downwind sailing through boats like they weren't there. He moved up to second and finished in that position. Hanson finished third, with Whiteley fourth and Ewan McMahon, making the trip over from Ireland, in fifth.

Beckett won the event on the last race due to a tie break with Hanson. Chiavarini was third, Wetherell fourth and Cookson fifth. Despite the cold weather, it was again a fantastic Qualifier north of Birmingham.

Next up is the Qualifier at the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk YC in Lowestoft on 13–14 October.

Full Standard results:

<https://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/showrace.asp?EventID=104&RaceURL=%5Bresults%5D/sthshieldsstd.2018nh.html>

Radial by Jon Emmett

What an unexpectedly great weekend. Despite all the storm warnings and the thoughts of cancelling one day's racing or even the whole weekend, 63 Radials were given a real treat with Race Officer David Kent at South Shields SC on 22–23 September at the first of the 2018 Autumn Qualifiers.

The adventures started early for some trying to get north. Jack Acton, in the Standard fleet, probably takes the prize because having just got on the only running ferry off the Isle of Wight, he made it to the gate at Southampton Airport in time to his flight to Newcastle only to be told he couldn't fly as the plane was overweight. So, whilst Abi Childerly and Arthur Fry jumped on the plane, poor old Jack had to go via Manchester Airport on an alternative flight. I sure he was not the only one with a late night getting up there.

Race 1 started with 14–16knts of westerly which held for most of the day. The cross current on the start line led to a few black flags in the very shifty (offshore) conditions. Jon Emmett nearly led the race from start to finish although he was blitzed on the final downwind leg by George Povall, but it was all to no avail, as she had been one of those black flagged at start time. This gave second to Nick Welborn and a notable third was top female Youth Matilda Nicholls fresh from an amazing silver at the Radial Youth Worlds in Kiel.

Race 2 was more of the same with Emmett leading Welbourn, but this time, it was the ever-improving Henry Beardsall in third place. With the shifts long and huge pressure differences across the course, the fleet got quite spread out.

As it started to warm up a bit for Race 3, the resulting heating increasing the wind instability further. Therefore, with the wind dropping and the current increasing, Povall spotted there was no one at the pin and did her first ever regatta port-end flyer (she had been promising to do one forever!) She crossed most but not all the fleet and it was Arthur Fry who was first to the windward mark. Emmett overtook Fry down the first run before, in turn, being overtaken by Beardsall up the final beat. Emmett, however, regained the lead on the reach and Fry passed Beardsall on the final run. With the increasing current and, finally, decreasing wind, the fleet was very bunched at the finish.

So, all in all, a great day for Nick Welborn, never finishing out of the top five, with Emmett first and Welborn second overnight.

Day two and the forecasted 10knt northerly came in, and with it a huge swell, at least for most sailors' standards, but it was Radial National Champion George Povall fresh(!) back (well maybe still a little jet lagged) from the World Cup in Japan who had the best boat speed in the big swell.

Race 4 was initially led by full-time sailor Clemmie Thompson who did a great job controlling the fleet before, finally, being passed by Emmett on the last beat, but Povall was again on the charge downwind, passing Thompson and closing the gap on Emmett to take second place.

Race 5 turned out to be the final race and Daisy, on route to Bath University and hoping for quick getaway, made a great start and led for most of the race but was eventually overtaken by Povall and Emmett on the final beat.

Unfortunately, the Radials were out of time for the sixth race (there is a 14.00 limit to start the final race so competitors know in advance when they can book their flights/ferries). So, the Radials beat the Standards (who did have six races) ashore for showers. Although the boat recovering with some breaking waves caused a few problems for some of the first to return.

Overall, it was Emmett (1st Master) on minimum points from Povall (1st Lady) and Welbourn (1st male Youth), with Matilda Nicholls top female Youth, her sister Flo Nicholls top female Junior and Finley Dickinson 1st male Junior. The next stop is the east coast with Lowestoft on 13–14 October – hope to see you there!

Full Radial results:

<https://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/showrace.asp?EventID=104&RaceURL=%5Bresults%5D/sthshieldsrad.2018nh.html>