

LOOSEMORE WINS MORE!

- **Aussie veteran grabs victory by a point**
- **Alan Davis quadruple still on**

Round 2 of the 2016 Rooster Laser Masters Super series took place at Felpham SC on June 11 & 12, serving a tasty appetiser for the big event happening 2 weeks later at Hayling. Entry numbers were pretty average on the whole, with 24 Standards and 29 Radials in total. Both fleets were boosted from high profile overseas entries looking to get some practice on UK waters ahead of the Nationals, with Jeff Loosemore (AUS) and Thomas Mueller (GER) adding international panache.

On a sunny & warm Saturday with breeze of 6-10 knots, the race course was set up nicely with only moderate tide affecting the course and generally favouring the right hand side of the beat. We got away right on schedule (when does that ever happen?) and in the STD fleet, Alan Davis carved out an early set of wins with a minimum of fuss. All very business-as-usual. Behind him Sergio Messina was emerging as the unlikely main challenger finding fantastic boat-speed downwind, with Peter Sherwin and Roger O’Gorman also prospering in the lighter conditions. Great also to see Chris Fyans return to Laser racing after a recent bout of illness at the Laser worlds, posting a good result in race 1.

By the final race of the day, Messina’s confidence was sky-high, enabling him to make a bid for the lead in race 3 from Davies which he held on to, to record his first ever win in Masters Series. Overnight, Davis led from Messina, O’Gorman and Sherwin.

Meanwhile in the Radial fleet, things were really hotting up. In the absence of perennial podium dwellers Emmett, Cockerill & Jones, it was an opportunity for the next generation to scrap it out for honours. Steve Smith, Andy Byrne, Ian Gregory and Niall Peelo all sensed the opportunity for glory and initiated a four-way streetfight. Byrne took race one which was also his first ever Radial race win, but Steve Smith responded superbly to take race 2 after a poor first result. Peelo was in all sorts of bother in race 1 & 2, managing to capsize in 6 knots, but subsequently grabbed race 3 by the horns and take the win to announce his challenge. Gregory had a tough time in the lighter conditions, but Ann Keats was well placed behind the leading pack posting a couple of 3rd places to be ready to pounce on any mistakes. David Binding was the overnight leader in the Great Grand Master category, ahead of returning Laser worlds hero David Killey.

Sailors convened in the club after racing to catch the various Euro 2016 games, and the club also streamed live footage of the America’s Cup from Chicago. Neil Peters led a breakaway delegation to break into Butlins next door to drink beer and make mischief generally, but were scuppered by some very polite security guards. Instead the gang headed into Bognor Regis’ finest football pub, which was an ‘experience’. That’s probably all we can say about that.

Sunday arrived with a torrential downpour meaning sailors were now living the worst of all holiday stereotypes – a wet weekend in Bognor. Whilst enthusiasm levels were generally low, the RO team had us up and running by 10.30, and as if by divine intervention, the rain dried and the wind arrived and the clouds (almost) parted. Best of all the increased southerly (15-18 knots) had whipped up a decent chop and downwind sailing became a surfer’s paradise. Chris Ellyatt and Mike Hicks also joined the standard fleet to add some quality in the increasing breeze.

In the standards, Stuart Hudson started to show some of his returning 1990’s form, taking an early lead from Davis only to be scuppered by missing the upwind gate and dropping to last place. German Ace Thomas Mueller (where was he on Day 1?) was right back in the mix also, showing us all how to sail downwind and regularly making up several places on the run. O’Gorman had switched to a MkII

sail for Sunday (blatantly illegally) but appeared to have chosen the wrong sail both days as he struggled to depower in the breeze. So no-one was inclined to protest. Sergio Messina was also struggling for pace and his promising challenge from day 1 faded in the stronger wind. In their place, Tony Woods, Mueller & Ellyatt were posting the most consistent results, but no-one really looked like mounting a serious challenge to the utterly dominant Davis. Race 3 ended in confusion as Davis led the first 4 boats to the wrong gybe mark (he is human after all). First to spot the mistake was wily old fox Mike Hicks, who stormed to victory followed home by club-mate Tony Woods

The big story however was in the Radial fleet again. As the first boats approached the finish line in race one, one boat appeared to have carved out a massive lead in the stronger conditions. Was it Smith, Byrne or Gregory? Peelo even? In fact it was none other than Aussie Sexagenarian (that does not mean what you think) Jeff Loosemore! What an incredible display of prowess in the conditions.

Race 2 kicks off and he's at it again! This time Loosemore is almost a full leg ahead of his nearest challenger (Max Hunt) showing that age is no barrier to top level performance, provided you know how to sail in waves, which most of us don't. With the prospect of outright victory, Loosemore kept a cool head to record a hat-trick of wins on Sunday and take the regatta overall win by a single point with his challengers powerless to stop him. Andy Byrne was closest finishing a highly creditable 2nd overall, with Ian Gregory pulling through well on the Sunday to take bronze overall. Binding was first GGM in 7th overall and Ann Keates was comfortably first Lady one place back.

All in all, a highly satisfactory weekend's sailing and drinking and a great prologue to the nationals in a range of conditions. Final mention should definitely go to the club – if Carlsberg ran racing regattas, they would be at Felpham SC. Absolutely everything ran like clockwork with the minimum of fuss from a highly professional and friendly regatta team. A real diamond of a club on the south coast and definitely one the Masters Series will be revisiting in the years ahead. Superb stuff!