

Noble Marine Laser Standard Qualifier, Stokes Bay SC, 10–11 March 2018

By Jake Farren-Price

Thirty-three Laser Standards made it to Stokes Bay for a great weekend of close racing in the first World and European Qualifier of 2018. On the Saturday, we launched into a dying wind and tried to start with the wind flicking between onshore (southerly) and an easterly. After a couple of abandoned starts, the wind started to play ball and 18knts of breeze came through, which eased through the day. On the Sunday, we had a nice 15knts of wind from the east, with tide also flowing east to west. The tide switched for the final race and the wind slowly decreased to end the day at 12knts.

Race 1 saw a strong breeze with a west to east tide running. The best starts were at the Committee Boat end and those playing the right-hand side led at the windward mark. In this pack were Ben Flower, Jamie Calder, Joe Mullan and Anthony Parke, with Jordan Giles right behind. The tide meant that the downwind was more of a broad reach on port – a procession with not many place changes but great fun if you were leading. By the end of the second upwind, Calder was leading with Flower and Mullan close behind. By the final mark, Flower had managed to squeeze ahead of Calder.

Race 2 saw another Committee Boat biased line. A slightly weaker breeze and only three or four shifts up the first beat meant the first to the mark were those with the best start who were able to hold good lanes on the lifted tack. First were Joe Woodley, Ben Childerley and Lewis Smith. The tide had eased from the first race and Woodley, followed by the top five, hit left looking downwind, but Jake Farren-Price, with Mullan, sailed a more direct path and overtook the leading bunch to round the very wide gate with Woodley. Woodley made good use of a right shift to bring himself back to control the middle, but Farren-Price and Mullan, who split left, were close behind. Down the final run, Farren-Price overtook Woodley and Mullan to claim the race win.

Race 3 saw the leaders hold starboard almost all the way to the port lay line and make good use of a little left shift with a nice gust to punch ahead of the others who tacked out early. Anthony Parke was first round the windward mark, followed by Mullan and Giles. On the downwind, the fleet spread out and the leaders extended. Down the final run, there was a good battle for third place between Calder and Giles, which Giles managed to win. The top three were Parke, Mullan and Giles. At the end of day one, Mullan was in a controlling position with a third and two seconds, followed by Farren-Price and Calder both on six points.

The first race on Sunday saw a nicely set pin-end bias with a lot of the beat to do on port. Ed Higson came off the pin end with the best start and controlled the flick onto port for the drag race to the windward mark. Once he tacked, the fleet went as well in order to try and hold a clear lane. Milo Gill-Taylor rounded the windward mark first. The run saw offset waves pushing right, creating a game of snakes and ladders. Parke and Calder rounded the gate first as Gill-Taylor pushed too hard and allowed a bunch to get inside. A good battle between Calder and Parke saw Calder break away and hold the lead to the finish, with Parke getting a yellow flag on the downwind. Farren-Price took second and Higson was third.

The penultimate race saw a black flag recall as the tide started to turn with a starboard bias. Mullan came off the starboard end with the best start and played the shifts nicely up the first beat, with Calder close behind and Joe Drake also playing the right-hand side. Mullan rounded the windward first and controlled the race from there. Farren-Price overtook Calder and Drake on the run to sit behind Mullan going into the second beat. Not much room for place changes on this beat as a lot of time was spent on port. The top three of Mullan, Farren-Price and Calder broke away from the rest of the pack and finished in that order.

Close points for the top three left everything to play for in the final race. With another pin-end bias, the long tack was port. Off the pin, Gill-Taylor, Woodley and Calder managed to get onto port early and start the drag race for the

windward mark. Farren-Price punched through the fleet slightly lower down and held to the starboard lay line. Around the windward mark, the fleet was still very close together and down the run Smith hit left early and came in surfing the waves with pace underneath the pack. Around the bottom mark, it was Smith, followed by Farren-Price and Calder. Since Farren-Price and Calder were joint on points, Farren-Price kept a loose cover on Calder up the second beat, with Smith trying to keep on top of Farren-Price. By the top of the second beat, Farren-Price edged ahead of Smith and sailed away down the run in first. With Mullan towards the back of the top ten, the fight was on between Calder and Farren-Price. Farren-Price held his nerve to win the race and the Qualifier, with Smith and Calder following.

Results:

1st Jake Farren-Price (11pts)

2nd Jamie Calder (13pts)

3rd Joseph Mullan (14pts)

1st Youth – Joseph Drake (8th)