

Noble Marine Laser Autumn Qualifier, WPNSA, 20–21 October

Standard by Jake Farren-Price

The weekend's forecast for the third of the Laser Autumn Qualifiers, held at WPNSA, was the other end of the scale compared with Lowestoft. Some weren't predicting anything over 5knts for the duration of the weekend. However, any sign of wind and the Race Officer made his intentions clear that he was keen to get away quickly.

The first puff of the day came in at around 1pm and the Race Officer sent us straight out. After a short AP and one recall, we were off with a constantly shifting breeze. Sam Whaley had the best start at the pin end, while a bit of a tacking duel for clear lanes had begun for the starboard ends. Towards the top of the beat, it was the people who played the right-hand side coming in ahead. We had a very light run with Elliot Hanson and Lorenzo Brando Chiavarini extending away. Up the second beat, it was a similar story to the first with patches of shifty breeze coming down. Towards the end of the beat, the wind was starting to switch between coming from either side of the Portland Bill. After waiting around to see if the breeze would stabilize, we were sent in.

Sunday started off looking like we weren't going to get any sailing in. However, after an hour's indefinite postponement, a nice thermal breeze came in. The Race Officer timed it perfectly, and by the time we were at the bottom of the harbour, the wind was steady. The start of the first race saw many boats pushing towards the pin end. Nick Thompson got the best start of the pack and played the left. Half way up the beat, Jake Farren-Price made good use of a righty to bring him almost level with Thompson, while Chiavarini and Joe Woodley were pushing further to the right. A small left shift at the top made it very close and lots of boats rounded in quick succession. Down the run, it was Chiavarini who managed to wiggle his way through the pack and round the go-right mark as Hanson split left. Chiavarini took the lead on the final downwind with Thompson and Hanson following.

The start of race three saw most of the fleet tacking onto port to get over to the favoured right-hand side of the course. Daniel Whiteley played a good first beat, rounding the top mark in the top three. Down the run, it was a case of staying in the pressure and avoiding the weed that had now become a serious boat speed killer on the course. Up the second beat, it was a case of staying in phase and, if they did this well, people could gain on both sides of the course. Chiavarini got another win under his belt, followed by Thompson and Whiteley.

The final race of the day saw a slight course change from the Race Committee when they pivoted the course to the left slightly to line up with the new breeze. At the start, Chiavarini, Hanson and Joseph Mullan got the best start from the pin and tacked to head towards the right-hand side. Michael Beckett got the best start at the starboard end and tacked out immediately. By the top mark, it was Chiavarini who led, followed by Beckett. Down the run, Chiavarini extended away securing the victory. However, it was all very tight in the battle between Thompson and Hanson for second place. Up the second

beat, these two were keeping an eye on each other and almost got involved in a friendly match race. On the final run, Thompson sailed around most of the front pack to claim third with Beckett in second and Chiavarini in first. At the end of the weekend, it was light-wind specialist Lorenzo Chiavarini who prevailed with a score line of 2, 1, 1, 1.



Leaders in the Standard fleet. Photo: Ian Bullock

Results:

- 1st Lorenzo Chiavarini (3pts)
- 2nd Nick Thompson (7pts)
- 3rd Elliot Hanson (8pts)

Full results:

<https://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/showrace.asp?EventID=106&RaceURL=%5Bresults%5D/wpnsaautstd.18nh.html>

Radial by Clementine Thompson

This weekend was the last of the three Laser Autumn Qualifiers. With sunshine, light winds and dolphins; it felt more like a tropical holiday than an October sailing event. The forecast always suggested tricky racing – there was high pressure above us all weekend making wind difficult to come by. With this in mind, the Race Officer did a good job of making the most of the wind we got.



Tranquil conditions at WPNSA. Photo: Andy Beck

On Saturday, we were postponed with a one-hour AP that refused to fly. The UKLA took this opportunity to hold a meeting for Laser sailors, where we discussed key issues like venues and timings for Qualifiers, and how to improve turnout at the Laser nationals. Meanwhile, the Race Committee were out in the harbour and detected some wind! The meeting was brought to a halt as we rushed out to launch.

The Race Course was at the bottom of the harbour, where a light southerly wind was filling in. The Standards started first and then the Radials were next. The Committee Boat end was quite busy, probably due to the dolphin playing around the bow. Dolphins or bias, we'll never know, but everyone was a bit eager and we required a general recall. The race started around 1.30pm in a generous 5knts. Matt Beck did well on the left of the course and took an early lead, followed by Jon Emmett. Monica Mikkola sailed fast downwind in the ever-dropping wind and was second by the LW gate. While Emmett and Mikkola headed up the second beat, the rest of the fleet experienced some difficulty in moving forwards. The wind was very patchy; sometimes you would be almost sitting out, sometimes your sail would be stuck in the middle of the boat. Linking up gusts and avoiding lulls was key. Due to the light winds, the race was shortened to finish at the top of the beat. Mikkola, Emmett and Arthur Farley occupied the podium positions.

We then returned to the start, waiting around for the westerly wind. Unfortunately, it never filled in consistently enough for racing. We were sent in at 4pm. However, that was not the end of the day's events.

As a lot of people weren't happy with the racing conditions, Ben Elvin stepped up to the plate and organized a mass protest to the Race Committee to abandon the one race sailed. Around 25 Radials showed up to the protest, with representatives from the front, middle and back of the fleet all giving evidence that the conditions were unfair. Upon hearing the evidence, the Race Officer made the call to abandon the race and the hearing was closed.

This meant that there would be a lot of pressure to race on Sunday, with two races needed for a series, three for a discard. Unfortunately, Portland Harbour was again like a mirror, and we went under indefinite postponement. However, before long, flags started fluttering and sails started to flap. The promised westerly breeze was filling in, so we launched and headed to the race course. In fact, the wind delivered more than any forecast expected, and we managed three races.

In Race 1, the leaders came from the right in some nice bands of pressure near the windward mark. Monica Mikkola, Lorcan Knowles and Arthur Fry were in the front bunch, which they retained until the finish line. Hannah Snellgrove sailed a great second downwind to finish fourth.

In Race 2, a few more sailors had cottoned on to the pressure on the right. In a repeating theme, Mikkola was in the front few at the first mark. The wind was getting lighter, however, and the jury were strict at enforcing Rule 42. There were a fair few yellow flags handed out for those who rocked too much. Finley Dickinson, new from the 4.7 class, did a great job of linking pressure up the second beat and led the race until the finish. Monica finished second and Clem Thompson third.

By Race 3, the thermally enhanced wind was beginning to drop out. It got shiftier and more patchy. Lorcan Knowles kept to the right and led around the first mark, with Clem second and Ben Whaley in third. Positions changed a little on the downwind, with Whaley taking the lead, and Mikkola and George Povall moving forward in the fleet. The aforementioned stayed in the top five for the rest of the race. Whaley did a great job to win, even managing to capsize on the second downwind and stay in the lead!

Overall, it was Monica Mikkola who won, sailing very well and discarding a second. In second and first Youth boy was Lorcan Knowles. More often seen in his 470 these days, Ben Whaley clearly hasn't forgotten how to sail a Laser, as he completed the podium. British Sailing Team girls Clem, Hannah and George finished fourth, fifth and sixth. Barty Gray was seventh and first Junior boy, Matilda Nicholls first Youth girl and Coco Barrett first Junior girl. Well done all, thanks to everyone for coming, and thanks to the organizers and volunteers for making the Qualifier happen.



One of the Radial starts. Photo Ian Bullock

Results:

1st Monika Mikkola (3pts)

2nd Lorcan Knowles (5pts)

3rd Ben Whaley (6pts)

Full results:

<https://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/showrace.asp?EventID=106&RaceURL=%5Bresults%5D/wpnsaautrad.18nh.html>