

## **Noble Marine Laser Standard Spring Qualifier at WPNSA, 11–12 March**

**By Sam Whaley**

38 Laser Standards made the journey down to the south coast for the second of the Noble Marine Laser World and European Qualifiers and were pleasantly greeted by lots of sun and a cool 8–10knts from the south. After quickly rigging up and the famous Ken briefing, all the competitors were sent afloat and sailed out into Weymouth Bay. The wind subsided slightly to only 6–9knts and had gone round more to the east before Race 1 got underway.

Elliot Hanson got the best start at the pin end. However, with the pressure light down that end, the starboard boats made a nice gain to be on top of the fleet. When the wind next went left, Hanson crossed and was able to lead around at the windward mark. Jack Aitken rounded in a close second with Lorenzo Chiavarini third. There was a close battle around the rest of the course but positions stayed the same at the finish.

By the finish of the race, the visibility had decreased substantially and soon the postponement flag was up whilst the fog cleared. Unfortunately, after an hour of waiting this never happened and everyone was sent ashore where racing was abandoned for the day.

Sunday dawned very foggy with no wind and racing was inevitably delayed whilst conditions improved. Within a couple of hours, the fog cleared and a light westerly wind filled in. The fleet were quickly launched and racing got underway!

Race 2 started with plenty of opportunity to grab hold of across the course. Sam Whaley led around the windward mark after staying in more consistent pressure. However, Harry Blowers overtook him on the downwind after the skewed course ruined a few people's strategies. Making a comeback to racing was Alex Mills Barton, who managed to sniff out some decent pressure on the second upwind and move up into second. However, Hanson showed good downwind speed to overtake Mills Barton and claim second by the finish.

After a few black-flag start attempts, Race 3 got underway in a hard left phase which allowed Jack Wetherell and Master sailor Paul Graham to port tack the fleet with a handsome lead. Wetherell managed to play his cards right and got straight over to the favoured right side to lead around the windward mark and ultimately for the rest of the race. Chiavarini managed to use his speed to his advantage to take second place, whilst Hanson remained consistent to claim third.

The final race of the day started with the right side of the course occasionally throwing out big bands of pressure. Aitken managed to make the most of these to lead at the windward mark, closely followed by Hanson. Hanson soon overtook Aitken on the downwind, whilst Mills Barton showed he

still had good downwind speed to take a few places on the downwind and move into a commanding position heading into the final beat. A large right shift on this beat benefitted all the leaders who had headed over to that side of the course, whilst a few unfortunate sailors were stuck on the left-hand side of the shift. Hanson won the race and in doing so took another Qualifier win. Mills Barton overtook more boats on the next downwind and was able to clinch second place overall, whilst Chiavarini finished third overall.

After three excellent races, we had, unfortunately, ran out of time so Ken had no choice but to send us home, leaving many sailors hungry for more. Luckily, the final spring Noble Marine Qualifier is at Stokes Bay SC this coming weekend! See you there.



*Elliot Hanson – the overall winner of the Standard fleet at the Qualifier*

Results:

- 1 Elliot Hanson, 4pts
- 2 Alex Mills Barton, 10pts
- 3 Lorenzo Chiavarini, 12pts

Full results:

<http://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/showrace.asp?EventID=94&RaceURL=%5Bresults%5D/wpnsa2std.2017nh.html>