

Manx Sailing & Cruising Club – Bourne Plaice Winter Series

When they saw a road sign "Injebreck closed" in the middle of the road near the reservoir dam wall, the 11 crews who had made their way up to West Baldwin on Sunday morning in the bitterly cold hailstorm probably thought their prayers had been answered and they could go home for a lie-in. However the road was closed at the North end of the lake so sailing could go ahead, after scraping the dinghies free of ice, snow and hailstones.

For Race 1, the Race Officer set a short course mainly at the Northern end of the water, where the wind appeared to be consistently from the North, though it was gusting from the East and South. In the first race Finlo Wright in his Tera Pro was over the start line early and by the time he had returned and restarted was a long way behind the leading group of Lasers sailed by Simon Pressly, Dave Batchelor and James Walker who managed to get round the first lap very quickly but then got becalmed. Dave Batchelor after years of sailing in the difficult conditions which West Baldwin produces, managed to get clear and by the finish was a remarkable three minutes ahead of Pressly. Ralph Kee and Andrew Williams in the other Lasers enjoyed their private battle and narrowly avoided being lapped by Batchelor. In the Junior boats, Ben Batchelor managed to finish the first lap ahead of Finlo Wright despite using the smaller-rigged Tera Sport. Finlo managed to get past Ben in the second lap but was passed again on their last lap and Jim Whitelegg in his Gull just managed to squeeze over ahead of Ben. Lucy Connors was the leading lady in a Topper Topaz and was followed on the water by Matthew Perry and Owen Williams who had another duel in their Tera Sports. After calculating the boat handicaps this was a Batchelor's race with Dave first and 10-year old Ben second. Simon Pressly was third.

For the second race the course was slightly longer but involved more sailing along the Eastern bank of the lake. By this time the wind had increased in strength but the direction of the gusts was even less predictable. Ralph Kee's capsizes just before and after the start should have been a warning to the others.

This time James Walker was the one who got clear in the second lap and by the end of the fourth lap was a full minute ahead of Kee. This was an impressive performance in a borrowed boat and sailing Injebreck for the first time this season. The other boats only completed three laps, and again Ben Batchelor finished ahead of Finlo Wright on the water. This time on handicap Ben Batchelor was the winner from James Walker and Ralph Kee. Ben has obviously 'taken onboard' his father's advice and looks set to win the January series showing that in this sport it is possible for all to have an equal chance of fair competition irrespective of age.

Our thanks to the hardy safety boat crew of Gordon and Dawn Dickens who provided a welcome reassurance to the capsized boats the race officers of Mike Pridham, Len and Stephen Arnold and our sponsors Bourne Plaice

Race 1: 1 Dave Batchelor; 2 Ben Batchelor; 3 Simon Pressly; 4 James Walker; 5 Jim Whitelegg; 6 Matthew Perry; 7 Ffinlo Wright; 8 Owen Williams; 9 Andrew Williams; 10 Ralph Kee; 11 Lucy Connors.

Race 2: 1 Ben Batchelor; 2 James Walker; 3 Ralph Kee; 4 Matthew Perry; 5 Ffinlo Wright; 6 Simon Pressly; 7 Owen Williams; 8 Jim Whitelegg; Lucy Connors and Dave Batchelor retired