

Write-up by Jerry Colman

A forecast of 32 knots gusting 40 and increasing from the SW did not put off a dozen hardy sailors who hit the start line at Injebreck at 10 am on Sunday for the 7th and 8th (and final) races in the Bourne Plaice December Series. After all sunshine was forecast too! A couple of capsizes before the start in the rather sharp gusts playing around the lake were harbingers of what was to come.

The course was a beat to no 2 mark by the dinghy park then across to no 3 and up to the top of the reservoir to 6 and back across the line. The gusts began to build right from the start and it soon became apparent that the extra sail area on Jerry Colman's Laser Rooster 8.1 was not so advantageous as Andrew Dean slipped past in the Laser Radial (much smaller sail) sailing higher and faster and he stayed ahead from then onwards. Also noticeable at the front of the fleet was the RS Feva sailed by youth team members Matthew Perry and Ben Batchelor. They were keeping the Feva upright and generally pointing in the right direction through all the gusts and shifts and taking all the opposition apart in the process. Other young sailors James Humphrey (Laser 4.7) and Arthur Banks-Jones (Topaz Uno) fought through to the finish while James Arnold managed a sequence of capsizes that finished with his retirement but the points for starting the race preserved his podium place for the series. Well done all those guys.

The first boats were round the windward mark as the gusts started to pick up some real force. From about this time on, I can't recall there being much time for the safety boat team to have a rest in the sunshine and admire the scenery. Huge downwind speeds were experienced with clouds of spray and occasional whoops of joy or horror and occasionally that sharp 'splat' as a Laser sail hit the water hard. Ralph Kee (Laser Standard) was first to no 6 but then got blown over almost straight away. Donald Edwards (Laser Standard) showed up after a brief absence and displayed excellent recovery technique from multiple capsizes as did Mike Swales in the Devoti with the usefully small blue sail. The beats were tough with big shifts in the gusts which were probably most lethal when they lifted the boat to windward, resulting in the sail being pinned in much too tight if you didn't respond right quick, luff up (not too far) and take the gain. Otherwise it was another swim. Chris Perry and Len Arnold in the Laser 2000 were just getting to grips with it all when the race was finished.

The race officers paid due attention to the carnage and finished the race after 2 laps for the quick boats and sent the fleet home happy thereafter.

Manx Sailing & Cruising Club would like to thank Rob Cowell of Bourne Plaice for sponsoring the series, Officer of the Day Keith Poole (ably assisted by Neil Rawlinson) and May Shiu Chan and Jenny Dean in the safety boat.

That's the end of the December Series so well done Andrew Dean who as can be seen from the score sheet with a whole card of seconds lost every battle but won the war. Also respect to Ralph and James with him on the podium.

Next race is the Frostbite Regatta which is on Boxing Day, first boats starting at 11.00am. This will be a pursuit race with start times from Keith Poole or on the MS&CC Website or Facebook page. After that the next Series starts on Sunday January 3rd.