

Manx Sailing and Cruising Club

Watling Streetworks Injebreck 2019 February Series Races 3 and 4, 10th Feb.

More Challenges for the Dinghy Sailors

After the gales of Friday and Saturday, enough to stop the Steam Packet, one might have worried that the weather gods were against us but no – they came up with sunshine and moderate to occasionally fresh breezes on Sunday morning to get races 3 and 4 of the February series off the mark.

11 boats took to the water (plus the patrol boat ably crewed by Helen Kee and Jenny Dean) for this evolution of the challenge. The younger sailors were off racing their Teras across so us seniors were looking forward to getting a bit nearer the podium if not onto it.

After launching, we set about exploring the wind patterns around the reservoir. This also normally helps Keith Poole, our very able Race Officer and Commodore, to assess and set the course which should contain a beat upwind, preferably from the start, some downwind work and some reaching across the wind (mostly for kicks as the boats go fastest on this point of sailing). Today however all potential legs of the course appeared to feature all three points of sailing so the gods were still having a laugh at us although the sunshine felt good.

For the first race, Stu Brew in the Devoti Zero with the big 9.1 square metre rig shot off from the start with all the rest wondering how but soon the beat into a south westerly off the start line (or reach in an Easterly if you were at the West end of the line) turned into a broad reach in a North Westerly almost all the way to mark 1 (about 100 metres away) before turning into a South Westerly beat again. Stu got more North Westerly than the rest of us and set off across the lake to mark 3 in the fresh South Westerly which went fresher and North Westerly half way so with an unexpected gybe in the middle.

The pile up behind Stu at mark 1 resulted in some calls but most got around ok this time. Half way across I gybed the Finn onto port only to find Simon Pressly's Laser Radial approaching rapidly on starboard and despite a gentlemanly 'I'm on starboard if don't mind Jerry' the boats 'kissed' amidships so I had to do a 720 (turning round twice) when the coast was clear after buoy 3.

This normally results in a trip to the back of the fleet but it suddenly went rather calm and once you start to spin the Finn it builds up a good bit of inertia so when I'd finished most were still more or less where they were when I started and the front of the fleet had parked at buoy 4 in a flat calm. Us in rear guard charged up in a smart little South Easterly and the Finn's momentum carried me through at least some of the fleet although it then went North West and allowed the front runners to tack back towards the start for lap 2.

Being slightly dizzy by this time (the boom of the Finn is very low and the rotations were still affecting my judgement) I set off in a Northerly direction from mark 4 hoping to tack back towards the start mark but fell into another hole allowing the part of the fleet I had just caught up to get away again and most of the rest of the fleet to slip through as well. Still it's not over till the fat lady sings.

Passing through the start line I was surprised to see Stu's D Zero right in front of me and the other D Zeros of Andrew Dean and Mike Swales up ahead again although closer than before. More wind holes lurked around us. Donald Edwards in the Laser standard missed the next big south westerly gust and went into the typical Laser downwind capsize where the sail slaps the water and the boat catapults you in then inverts before you can get back in touch. I suspect that gave Ralph Kee in the other Standard enough of a margin to hold Don off till the finish. (They were third and fourth.) The Laser Radials of Mike Pridham and Simon Pressly however showed where the quality lay with first and second with Mike being a clear minute ahead. My Finn was last to finish well behind the well sailed Zada (Finn, Keith Holden) who had battled his way almost to the front. Jim Whitelegg in the Gull finished a lap earlier but still managed to beat me by 6 seconds on corrected time. I suppose this shows that the handicapping system works although I wish it would work for me a bit harder.

So that was quite a lot of challenges for a race of only 3 laps of a short course. Keith set the same course for the second race in some sharply freshening conditions pre-start resulting in some spectacular planing and at least one capsize – James Penn in the Laser Radial – but he recovered quickly and was there for the second start.

Similar conditions to the previous race then applied but this time your correspondent's Finn used her momentum to creep round mark 1 while everyone else was stationary in no wind. A private breeze from the South gave us a half a leg lead before the next boat rounded and it looked good and stayed good for the whole lap. We got two more laps in during which Andrew Dean in his lighter and therefore faster accelerating D Zero shot up from behind and stole an inside line at the next mark. (He went on to win by a healthy margin.) I held on to the North at mark 4 on both occasions and gained substantially on the other Finn who tacked South so the tactics were all changed now. On the final lap after due consideration I tacked South at the final mark and came 7th. Keith went North and beat me over the line by 8 seconds and finished 5th! I was also 1 second behind Ralph Kee (6th) in the Laser Standard on corrected time. The injustice of it. Simon Pressly was 2nd, Mike Pridham 3rd and Donald 4th. I did manage to hold off Stu Brew, Mike Swales and James Penn.

Some photos and the results are on the club website. They were remarkably close despite the variations in the wind etc. Looking forward now to next Sunday.

See you all then, Jerry Colman