

Manx Sailing and Cruising Club

Teddy Dunn pressed by Peter Cope at the top

The third and fourth races of the January Watling Streetworks Injebreck dinghy races took place on Sunday with a brisk and gusty westerly breeze and brightening conditions as the sun rose over the southern spurs of Carraghan and Slieau Ree. 12 boats from four of the Island's sailing clubs hit the start line at 1000, all hoping for a shift or a gust in their favour that was denied to all the rest. With the wind blowing across the reservoir there was a good deal of reaching (with the wind blowing across the boat's heading). This is the fastest point of sailing where the boats can accelerate rapidly up to planing speeds, lifting the bows out of the water and sending plumes of spray to port and starboard as the crews hang on towards the stern to avoid nose-diving.

The course started with a short upwind leg to no 1 mark then a turn away, often in gusty and shifty conditions, toward no 3 across the lake. The gybe at no 3 could catch you out if it happened in a gust. Some thought they saw buzzards circling over the mark. Your correspondent in his Finn was concerned to see Mark Buttery's Laser wipe out right in front as he sped into the gybe but just managed to avoid slicing off the Laser's masthead with the Finn's metal centreboard and then throw the boat through the gybe after seeing Mark swimming lustily back towards his boat. I remembered then why I had sold my Laser.

The reach up the lake to no 5 saw some very high speeds attained with the RS Aeros of Teddy Dunn, Peter Cope, Dave Batchelor and Simon Cain showing clean transoms to most of us. These lightweight single handed skiffs accelerate and plane easily and are hard to beat on this sort of day unless or until they make a mistake and even then a quick recovery from capsize can limit the damage. Both Teddy Dunn and Peter Cope in their Aero 7's did go for a dip in the second race while tacking in a big shift at the downwind mark but they were up again before the rest of us could catch them. The Lasers however, despite being twice the weight of the Aeros, can also achieve high speeds on the reach and the handicap system gives their more experienced but still athletic sailors (Simon Pressly, Ralph Kee and Bob Love) a good chance of a result. For the Finns (Keith Holden and undersigned) the boats are twice the weight again. With the larger sails the handicap advantage is much reduced but the even greater experience of us Finn sailors can occasionally allow us to squeeze out in front.

In the end Teddy and Peter shared the honours in both races, swapping places, with Pressly and Kee followed by your correspondent in race 3 and Pressly and Batch in race 4 with me 5th again hoping consistency will pay off in the end.

Teddy leads the series from Peter and Simon with battles for the lower places ongoing all through the fleet.

Thanks to Andy Dunn and Peter Hooson-Owen in the patrol boat, Keith Poole for running the races so efficiently and Watling Street for their long-term generous support. Full results can be found on the MS&CC website and some great pictures by Andy can be found on the MS&CC Facebook pages. See you all next weekend!

Write-up by Jerry Colman