

Manx Sailing and Cruising Club

Watling Streetworks Injebreck February Series 11th Feb 2024

Big change in conditions attracts a bigger fleet.

A forecast of 8 to 10 knots maybe gusting 11 or 12 West with sunshine attracted a fleet of 14 boats including some of our old (and one new) favourites ensuring some interesting manoeuvring at the starts and round the early marks. Westerly conditions at Injebreck tend to be gusty, shifty and highly variable depending on where you are on the lake so astute observation and experience gained over the years will both pay off if employed to best effect.

We were all delighted to see Jim Whitelegg sailing the Gull and Keith Holden in his Finn 'Zada' (tough competition for your correspondent's Finn) back on the water again as well as George Pearce in the Tera Sport at the other end of the seniority scale. The age range on the water of at least 60 years in this physically, mentally and psychologically demanding sport is surely most impressive. Being towards the upper end of that range I can attest to the satisfaction derived from safe completion of 2 races regardless of the final place and despite being plunged into the icy water in a leaky drysuit, although it's better to be warm, dry and nearer the front.

So to the racing. Good starts were essential to get clear air and an unimpeded run up to and round the first mark. Holden showed his talent by choosing the right spot on the line in wind, on the gun and with the speed of the Finn was clear round mark 1 and held the lead on the water through to the end of the race. Joe and Eric Whitelegg in the sapphire blue-sailed Enterprise pushed hard to finish just 10 seconds back with Dave Batchelor in the H2 and Colman in the other Finn all finishing well within a minute of the leader. These four had pulled away from the rest for a while but on lap 3 with the leaders almost becalmed around the downwind mark the rest of the fleet bore down on us with their bow waves roaring and so our safety gap was gone.

So what would the handicaps do to the order on the water? Quite a lot as it happened. The Enterprise was well up and with the Finns and the H2 giving it a bunch of time they took honours on corrected time. Next came the Laser Radials of Andrew Dean and Bob Love from the chasing bunch with their bandit handicaps and only then in 4th on handicap came Zada. Next on handicap, 2 seconds back, was George Pearce in the well sailed Tera and it wasn't until 10th and 11th that the other Finn and the H2 slotted in. Intervening places were very close with Tom Watterson in the RS Aero 5 holding off Roo Hyett in a similar boat by just 5 seconds then Peter and Max Cope in the Laser 2000 a further 2 seconds behind and Simon Cain in the RS Aero 7 another 2 seconds back. Some would have thought of many instances when any of them could have picked up those vital few seconds but we all must learn for next time. So it was also for Jim Whitelegg in the dangerously handicapped Gull who missed a mark unfortunately right in front of the OOD so scored NSC (not sailed course) in race 1.

Half time between races is a time to congratulate the winners, take a look at the boat and maybe relax a bit as the rest of the fleet finish but not too much. If you don't pay attention Injebreck will get you even on a nice day like this so while mulling over how to get in front of the other Finn I caught an unexpectedly sharp gust while sitting on what became the wrong side of the boat with the mainsheet round my neck and approx. 8 nanoseconds later I was in the water. The boat popped up again quite quickly but it then became apparent that the little ladder I had installed for just such an

event was too short so I needed a leg up from the patrol boat. Thanks to Martin Jackson and Huw Bevan for their help. Perhaps I'll need to charter a floating crane to follow me around offshore. Learning from this will entail paying more attention even if it's a lovely day, fitting a better longer ladder, growing much bigger muscles, burning off fat and zipping the dry suit up properly.

The second race starting sequence began when I was back upright and on board (thanks Keith) and so with an inner layer of slowly warming water I just made the start in time to spot the other Finn on another flier off towards the first mark. However the race then turned into a bit of a drifter with only one lap completed after the 20 minute minimum time limit. The Copes took the race by a minute but thereafter places after application of handicaps were very close with Batchelor beating Cain by 1 second and Jim Whitelegg coming in a creditable 4th just 22 seconds back having sailed the correct course on this occasion. The rest of the results came within a minute or two. This leaves Batchelor leading the February Series from Watterson and then Dean but all to play for over the next 2 weeks, so if you want a competitive sail of a Sunday morning give Injebreck a try.

Thanks again to the patrol boat crew, the Race Officer Keith Poole and our sponsors Watling Streetworks. Full results and some pics on the club website and FB.

Jerry Colman