

Challenging Racing on Lough Erne Yacht Club Summer Regatta

In a superb weekend of competitive sailing the 2 day Lough Erne Yacht Club Summer Regatta on Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th June tested the mettle of sailors from 7-70 years old. While racing was the focus of the two days, traditional music, jazz and fine food provided entertainment for sailors and other club members.

Over the course of the Regatta, 5 fleets competed in 6 races. 26 boats and over 53 sailors participated in increasingly windy and gusty conditions. The 3 senior fleets and the Lasers followed the same courses. The Regatta Rules indicated that if a boat sailed six races they would be able to discard their worst score. Boats only sailing on Saturday or Sunday were penalised by being unable to discard a race and by receiving penalty points for their missed races. The outcome in some fleets was decided by these two race rules.

There were separate start sequences for the Fairy Fleet and J24 Fleet, while the Yeoman and Laser fleets started together. There were only 6 minutes separating the starts; the fastest fleets started last, creating competition in close quarters and requiring a higher degree of skill and knowledge of the rules from all competitors. The Toppers, the junior fleet (average age 8 yrs old) followed a separate shorter course.

Saturday: For the first two races the course remained the same, club line to Divann via the Bay Mark x 2 and finish over the club line. The third race by contrast was a 'Round the Island's' Race taking all the fleet to Rossfad, Halfpenny Rock and around Inishfree island before returning back to the club line via the inner bay mark. Aply set by John Phillips and Fred Ternan the courses were challenging for all fleets.

The Fairy Fleet, racing 104 years on Lough Erne (on the 5th June 2010 exactly) had four boats competing for their glorious silver trophies. On Saturday, M Whaley on Meave took the first place in all three races, while Storm helmed by J Kelly took 2nd place.

Over the three Saturday races, the J24 Fleet had five boats tightly competing for the top spots. Skipjack helmed by J Kane held off the challenge of Mejoolie helmed by B Humphreys and Jorvik helmed by B Gallagher to take two firsts and a second leaving him three points clear of the fleet.

In the Laser fleet, A Gareeb and J Whittaker took first and second place respectively for their three Saturday races. In the Topper fleet O Louden-Brown and F Ghareeb shared the first places however, Orfhlaith took 2 first places to Fouad's 1 first and 2 seconds.

The Yeoman fleet, the largest fleet competing in the Regatta with eight boats had the most changeable results of Saturday day. Seemingly unbeatable Honey Bee helmed by D Dooley took first place in the first two races however they incurred an 'On Course Start'(OCS) penalty in the third race moving them into second place overall. Paddy Jo helmed by K Wilson took second in two races while Crista helmed by B Forsyth took second place in the third race and first in the third race to move into first place overall.

Sunday: The first of Sundays 3 races began in strengthening winds. All five fleets took to the water at 11am for a day full of racing. A different course was set for each race taking into account changing wind directions and increasingly challenging gusts.

In the Fairy Fleet the dominance of M Whaley in Maeve was completed by a further 3 first places, enabling him to discard a first place and convincingly giving him the overall title ably assisted by crew, C Louden-Brown. Storm helmed by J Kelly and Doreen helmed by P Louden-Brown and Argo helmed by C Burgess finished in 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively.

The results in race 4,5 and 6 in the J24 Fleet saw third placed Jigalo helmed by T Rippey take two firsts and a second place in Sundays races and put them jointly first with Saturday's leader Skipjack helmed by J Kane. When the discards were taken into account and the number of first place scores were counted, Skipjack was awarded the Howard Cup. J Kane's winning crew was made up of J Thompson, R Stevens and H Johnston. The Howard Cup was awarded to Skipjack by Janet Howard in memory of her husband Roy who made a hugely significant contribution to the club over his lifetime. The best placed Westerly, Jorvik helmed by Brendan Gallagher took home the Morris Cup with 3rd awarded to Mejoolie helmed by Barry Humphreys, and 5th to Jade helmed by Sean Mc Cosker and Katrina Mc Girr.

In the Laser Fleet Saturdays positions didn't change. A Ghareeb took first and J Whittaker second place. O Louden-Brown and F Ghareeb in the Toppers retained their previous positions based on sailing the entire regatta while L Pedersen who only sailed on Sunday took first and second place in the two races sailed by the Toppers.

The Yeoman fleet had a strong top two boats. Saturdays leader, Crista helmed by B Forsythe, and Honeybee helmed by D Dooley with K Wilson helming Paddy Jo and D Mc Carthy in Raj completing the top four. The end of Sunday's races did have a different complexion. Paddy Jo; K Wilson with E Beattie moved from fourth to first place by virtue of a discarded 10 point 'did not finish' from the first race. B Forsythe took second place after leading from Saturday up to the last race. Third place was taken by Raj helmed by D Mc Carthy. Honeybee didn't complete all the races moving down to 7th place, while Lady Rose helmed by R Morrison who only sailed on Sunday took fourth place.

The prizes were awarded by the Commodore Terry Harpur with a number of special awards given by Mae Burke the Rear Commodore: The Spirit of the Regatta was celebrated with a prize awarded to C Burgess in his Argos, while Mug of the Day was awarded to B Forsyth for a small incident noted which involved him going aground, but the least said about that the better!! Overall an excellent regatta was enjoyed by a club full of good humour and competitive sailing!