

49 skippers from 6 different nations, England, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and Wales gathered for the start of the DragonForce 65 Nationals at Gosport. First registration day, Friday had been a busy day with practicing taking place from early Friday morning through until past 5 p.m.

Whilst scrutiny of rigs was undertaken from competitors with all their rig choices, both from the forecast and the very light airs, it soon became clear that A+ would likely be the rig of choice. This rig has done wonders for the class and a testament to its popularity was in the fact that all skippers had at least A+ and A available to them.

Unfortunately during the week, the warm temperatures and particularly bright sunshine brought up the weed in the main South lake. Fortunately, of course, the availability of using the smaller but still challenging North lake meant that practice could be fulsome.

Saturday morning would bring little real change in the weather so it was obvious that racing would at least have to start on the North lake. Would local knowledge count for anything for as well as the 6 different nations being represented, no less than at least 22 different clubs were involved?

Principal Race Officer Lester Gilbert set a windward – leeward gated course and racing got under way on time. The early morning mirror finish gave way to some breeze predominantly from the South.

Race 1 (seeding) C Fleet appeared to answer the question about local knowledge as Nigel Brown, Rob Lyne and Alex Cory, took 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, separated only by Jonas Samson from Sweden.

Ken Binks, Derek Priestley, Martin Gray and Mick Chamberlain (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> in B Fleet) immediately disproved the local knowledge benefit. Peter Molinaar (Netherlands), Rolf Dannehammar (Sweden), and Tim Long reinforced, the visitors' skills with local Richard Filer filling out the top 4 in A Fleet seeding.

Race 2 is usually something of a settler as any normal A Fleeters, work their way up through the field. Mike Nichols and Buzz Coleman were the first to make such a move starting in C Fleet, and despite when Mike was leading the field and they ALL followed him on an incorrect choice of marks for the gate they both progressed to A Fleet, where Mick Chamberlain, Ken Binks and Rolf Dannehammar would lead the fleet home.

Race 3 saw Paolo Cappa (Italy) progress from C to A as Alex Cory, Derek Priestley, Jonas Samson and Nigel Brown took 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> in A Fleet.

Not having got his boat really going during the morning it was local knowledge perhaps that helped Peter Dove make a move from C to A Fleet as Tjakko Keizer (Netherlands), Jim Cheek, Peter Molinaar and Jonas Samson took the first 4 places in race 4.

Now it was time for Liz Tushingham and Trevor Binks to work their ways from C to A whilst Alex Cory, Buzz Coleman and Paolo Cappa locked out the first 3 places. Alex, Nigel and Mark Dicks then closed out race 6, Jim. Tim and Buzz took Race 7.

By this time the breeze which had been very much assisted by the Sea Breeze coming in from the South East was starting to falter. C and B fleet were able to complete their heats but the start of 8A was delayed as Lester tried to wait for the now swinging but very light airs to settle. 8A turned out to be the last heat of the day with Alex, Buzz, Derek and Nigel getting the better of difficult conditions.

End of Day 1 then with Alex on 15 points Net, having been able to discard his 2 13<sup>th</sup> places, the 4 1sts keeping him 6 points clear of Nigel on 21 with Derek on 24 and Jim on 26 keeping each other honest.

Let's see what Sunday brings, the forecast is for South Easterly's again ranging from 7 – 12 mph with the possibility of some gust to 24 – Oh yes that's what it was thought today might be like!!

Good luck to all after retiring to Hardy's for the Championship dinner on Saturday evening.