

2018 Vane A Championship – The Final Day and Round Up of the Event

The final Friday at the Vane A National Championship, held at Gosport and sponsored by Dean and Reddyhoff, saw a light but solid whole sail breeze from the south east. Skippers and mates were tired from the week's punishing schedule, but keen to sail in probably the best conditions of the week. With a short lunch break five more heats were completed making a total of 25.

The 2018 Vane A National Champions and winners of the Scrutton Cup were Martin Roberts and Bernie McNulty: a popular and well-deserved win, having sailed their Simpson *M'Aidez* design superbly through the widely varying weather conditions of the week. In the last day they increased their lead to 9 points from second place David and Allan Bell, sailing a Simpson *Lightening*. In 3rd place and seven further points down were Graham Butler and Keith Wiseman sailing their Bantock design *Shield*.

Winner of the Jonnies Cup for best windward performance were Martin Roberts and Bernie McNulty, and the Wing and Wing trophy for the best downwind legs was won by David and Alan Bell. The Denis Lippett junior trophy was awarded to ten-year-old Thomas Wyeth, who braved everything from the wild conditions of the first Sunday to the extreme heat of the final days. Well done, Thomas! The Veterans award was won by Peter Whiteside who was ably mated by Eddie Greenwood.

The main raison d'être of the longer than usual event is to enable every boat in a large fleet to race everyone else. It also ensures that boats are able to perform in the widest range of weather conditions, so designs targeted specifically at a narrow wind range are generally avoided. That the nearly 100-year-old measurement rule is still as effective after all this time, is demonstrated by the displacement range of the top three boats, with one weighing best part of one third less than the heaviest!

The Yachting Monthly Cup, sailed during the single day knock-out competition on the Wednesday, was won by Peter Fothergill and Paul Edwards with their Hollom design *Reference Point*.

A special mention must go to CJ and Rob Vice, sailing one of the most iconic designs in the class, Roger Stollery's *Clockwork Orange*. Although sailing a 47-year-old boat, they won some significant points including three from the overall winner and sailed into the runners up place in the Yachting Monthly Cup.

This year's event included a significant number of young skippers and mates, many competing for the first time in the event. Skippers Josh Dicks, CJ Vice, Zak Roberts and Lewis Wyeth and mates Jay Britton, Amber Geldard, Brillie Vice, Russell Wyeth, and Thomas Wyeth not only competed well but considerably lowered the average age of the fleet! They are Free Sailing's future and frequently gave the more experienced competitors a run for their money.

A major event of this type takes a lot of organising, and race officers Roger Stollery for the first two days and Jacque Cook for the following four kept a close watch on the fleet to ensure fair and enjoyable racing for all. They were helped by a large team of volunteers from the home club, and at times from the visiting clubs. Special mention must go the Martin Roberts for his excellent assistance with the Yachting Monthly Cup and the behind the scenes Organising Committee for all they did prior to and during the championship. A big thank you for everyone who was involved!

It has been most successful and enjoyable event and skippers and mates will already be thinking of strategies for winning next year, at Fleetwood!

Mervyn Cook