

UK v US Regatta 2017

Fun, friendly, enjoyable and with serious vane 36 racing!

It most certainly was a memorable weekend, with a great turnout of 21 vane 36 model yachts at Gosport Model Yacht and Boat Club. The mayor of Gosport warmly welcomed all competitors and especially the visitors from the United States, who fielded a team of seven boats. The visiting boats were all beautifully built, some stripe planked in wood, and there were some innovative hull designs. Innovation continued to rigs, most notably the single masted schooner of Mike Stobbe's *Judy*, sail number SF48. Rob Fisher's *Last Call*, sail No SF165, used very high tech 'Cuben Fibre' sail cloth - Mylar with a chopped strand scrim.

After briefing by the Principal Race Officer, (PRO), Jacque Cook, the Commodore of San Francisco Model Yacht Club, Colleen Stobbe, presented all competitors with a specially embroidered peaked cap each, after which they all made their way to the eastern end of the lake for the first beats.

Although Saturday was warm and sunny there was a testing light and variable wind direction, largely, from the north-west. As is traditional for vane sailing events at Gosport, the Mayor set the regatta in motion by starting the first race of the series, this time between Jeff Stobbe sailing for the US and Graham Reeves. Graham has organised the bi-annual UK/US Exchange series for many years, and the series has established firm friendships across the seas.

The race teams at each end of the lake maintained a brisk pace as, with 21 boats, it was important to complete as many heats as possible in the day. The lack of a stable wind pattern was testing at times, and the 'floating' mates from Gosport and from Bournville had their hands full ensuring boats without a full crew had their boats re-trimmed when they came in on the opposite bank. There were some very close finishes: Stephen Ma of the US team missed out on a win by a couple of inches. Ed and Pat Schoenstein sailing *Peanut*, also of the US team, had a notable downwind win against Anthony Warren and Lester Gilbert sailing *Tweety Pie*.

As the day progressed the wind got lighter and lighter and eventually by about 3.30 deserted the lake entirely. The two boats in the last board of the round took half an hour to drift down the pond. The PRO consulted with the skippers and mates and got a resounding 'please, let's stop now', so racing was abandoned for the day. The re-sails were rescheduled for first thing on Sunday.

At the end of the first day including the re-sails undertaken on Sunday morning, points were tight. Taking into account byes, Shaun Wyeth and mate (youngest son) Thomas Wyeth led, and John Fisher and mate Ellen Fisher, for the US team were second. Peter Hopkins of Bournville was in third place closely followed by Mervyn Cook with mate Andy Fernie from Gosport, Jeff Stobbe for the US team and Graham Reeves, tied in fourth position. All to play for on the second day!

On Sunday, thank goodness, the underlying wind had strengthened, enabling more heats to be raced. The PRO for the day, Roger Cole, got proceedings underway promptly. The wind backed and veered several times and on three occasions the designated beats became designated runs. There was a mix of close racing, re-sails and some confusing sharp turns and 360 degree circles by some boats. As the day progressed skippers began to understand the shifts and sailing became more

logical. The 'floating' mates had to work hard to ensure boats were re-trimmed efficiently and set on their way. They were faced with a steep learning curve as boats had a variety of sheeting systems and some unusual and very effective American vane gears.

A vote of thanks goes to 'floating mates' Lisa McKerchar and Vic Applegate from Bournville, and from Gosport, Eric Meighen, Mike Dann and Bob Pearson. They almost certainly covered more distance along the bank than even the competitors.

A similar big thank you goes to the starters, marshals, line judges, scribes and scorers: Allan Oxlade, Roy Scott, Peter Dove, Eric Thomas and Julie Lawley. Also to the two PRO's Jacque Cook and Roger Cole. They were all instrumental in ensuring the weekend was a resounding success.

The excellent dinner at The Hornet Services sailing Club on Saturday evening, organised superbly by Chrissie and Andy Fernie, enabled competitors, families and friends to get together and enjoy food and the company in historic and comfortable surroundings.

All competitors acquitted themselves well. Everyone scored points, and again on the Sunday some boards were won by tiny margins after racing the length of the lake. In the final analysis, first place was a very fitting tie between John and Ellen Fisher from the San Francisco Sailing Club sailing *Bucket List*, and Shaun and Thomas Wyeth from Gosport Model Yacht and Boat Club sailing *Tasmanian Devil*. In third place were Mervyn Cook and Andy Fernie sailing *Hhot*. The winning United Kingdom team had skippers' names drawn from a hat and included those that were new to the sport as well as seasoned old hands. The age range included two skippers that were well into retirement age and three young people, Lewis, Russell and Thomas Wyeth. Commiserations went to the US team that also had a range of age, and the only two ladies competing. They all sailed well, and next time the UK team will need to look to their laurels!

It was indeed ***fun, friendly and enjoyable as well as seriously competitive racing.***