

Laser UK Masters Nationals 2014 18-20th July

A report from Hamish Fowler

Peter Sherwin Grand Master Champion 2014

Steve Smith – 3rd Radial

Julian Cooke – 4th Master



Four of Chew Valley Lake SC's Laser sailors made the long but beautiful drive through Wales to Pwllheli in North Wales last weekend to take part in the 2014 UK Masters Nationals. The team of Peter Sherwin, Julian Cooke, Steve Smith and Hamish Fowler all had their own goals and were clearly excited by the prospect of sailing on the sparkling waters of Cardigan Bay. A total fleet of 71 boats, 45 standard rigs and 26 radials made the journey and with the age limit lowered to 33, lots of young(er) guns had made the trip so it was going to be a competitive, hard fought series.

Friday dawned bright and fresh after a large overnight electrical storm with strong winds, but by race o'clock the wind had died to around 5 – 7 knots, and with a large 'slop' left over conditions were difficult. Race 1 proved difficult to get away with a general recall and a blag flag used for the standards. Julian and Peter has a solid start with a 7th and 16th respectively and Hamish sweeping in with a 28th.

Race 2 proved equally as difficult to get away but with a slightly stronger breeze Peter found his stride, with an awesome lesson in starting. The fleet were fighting for position at the committee boat end of the line while Peter chose the pin end which was strongly port biased. Hamish and Julian were languishing at the committee boat end. On the starting gun Peter tacked onto port and crossed the whole fleet by miles. Peter was first the windward mark and finished 3rd. Julian and Hamish had difficult races, proving that the start is everything in these fleets, with 19th and 36th.

After the long delay in getting Race 2 away, for race 3 the wind had dropped right away, and although Hamish was lying in 12th place after the first windward mark, the race office rightly abandoned for the day following a large shift and only 1.5kts of fitful zephyrs on the water. In the radials, Steve started

with an 11th, which was to be his series discard and a 5th in the second race. With racing abandoned, the fleet headed home to gorge itself on hog roast in the warmly hospitable Pwllheli Sailing Club.

Saturday was a non-event, with no breeze whatsoever and by early afternoon, the race officer abandoned for the day. Hamish and Steve decided to make good what little breeze had built by three o'clock and went for a play whilst our 49ft Oyster 'support' boat ably crewed by James Fowler (CVLSC's reigning Topper 4.2 Regatta Fleet National Champion) and his Granddad disappeared off in search of mackerel for the CVLSC teams evening meal. The team enjoyed a smashing meal of eight freshly gutted mackerel together that evening. It was noted that Hamish didn't drink *any* wine that night, - it was *very good* wine indeed.



Fully stoked for a final days sailing, the fleet took to the water at 0930 for a 1000 start on Sunday which was sunny with a gentle breeze from the South East. The forecast was for a big shift to the North West so we were all waiting for the big swing. With no recalls, the fleet was well behaved and keen to get on with the racing. Julian (6th and 17th) and Peter (7th and 11th) continued their excellent form with Hamish having a difficult morning in the light conditions, although he made sure all the standards got to the finish safely. In race 5 Hamish was unable to capitalise on being on the right side of the big wind shift of the day and although he had been lying 15th, he had slipped to 27th by the finish such was the closeness of the racing.

Steve however had found his mojo, and was motoring, positing a 9th in race 4 and was elated at the finish of race 5 with an excellent 1st. Steve was now in top gear and finished his series with a 3rd and a 2nd, moving him to third overall in the Radials which was an excellent result in a highly talented fleet.

Race 6 was a terrific race for Peter and Julian, who worked themselves to 1st and 2nd after the first lap - finishing 3rd and 4th - really terrific sailing from Team Chew's top sailors. Hamish posted a 31st, again unable to find a way through this fleet of wiley old foxes but learning every step of the way. The final race of the day had seen the wind shift all the way to the north, and with the breeze coming off the shore the shifty conditions made it a really tough race. Hamish finally found his stride, and came home with a 22nd - his best of the series, but not before Julian had tried to sabotage him by capsizing right in front of him whilst ducking on port!

Pete's excellent series and 7th overall saw him crowned as Grand Master National Champion for 2014, with Julian close behind in 10th and only just out of the chocolates as 4th Master. Hamish finished in a mildly disappointing 33rd – but with glimmers of hope for the future.

Chew Valley Lake Sailing Club and the Laser Fleet should be proud of their team and their success is testament to the competitive fleet we have at the Club. With the Inlands at Oxford SC in November, we should look to make a big impression at that event.

