



The Round Holes Trophy

Steve Parry

Back in September 2018, the Club hosted its annual Open Meeting for Series One GP14s — however the river was not on its best behaviour as Steve Parry relates...

You do not need a big fleet to have an afternoon of close racing and great fun at York RI Sailing Club. This was amply demonstrated at this year's Round Holes Trophy, which took place in river conditions that were far from ideal and very challenging, even for the local teams.

Heavy rain in the days preceding the event produced something of a flood on the day of the race. This had submerged all the jetties and produced huge amounts of flotsam (not to mention the occasional tree), all of which streamed past the club house on a swirling current.

Do we race?

After much sucking through teeth by the race officer it was decided that the wind was sufficient for a GP14 to be able to punch the current and that we could 'manage' without jetties.

"...the trick in starting was simple: avoid being OCS!"

Three races were programmed back-to-back, thereby avoiding the need to attempt any more than one landing without trashing the boat! With lots of co-operation and even more friendly banter, all the boats made it safely onto the water without anybody being swept away. Up-wind was down-current and it



The Round Holes Trophy boats battling the adverse river conditions

was rapidly apparent that the trick in starting was simple: avoid being OCS! We also realised equally quickly that our friendly, massive iron bridge, that loomed just off the leeward mark, had become a no-go zone (well, 'no-go' if you wanted to keep your mast in your boat!).

A small island joins in...

Race one got away cleanly in spite of a small island of logs and shrubbery joining the fleet just before the start. The Old Yellow Boat grabbed an early lead and never looked back, leaving Jens Kuhn and Pete Craggs to battle it out for second and third places. Pete, a seriously good Series Two man, had borrowed his mum and dad's much-loved plastic Series One but he seemed strangely baffled by its stern sheeting and lack of string! As a result Jens and Rachel sailed their 'shed', complete with

adopted frog mascot, into a great second position.

Race two proved a clear win again for Steve and Kevin in the OYB but this time Pete and Phil took second spot, while Jens and Rachel still managed a creditable third.

"...he seemed strangely baffled by its stern sheeting and lack of string!"

Race three looked like being a much closer affair but in the end the same three boats prevailed and the finishing sequence matched that of race one, giving Steve and Kevin a clean sweep in the Old Yellow Boat.

Tricky return

The return to base was tricky, some opting to trust in a leap of faith when they judged themselves to be adjacent a

jetty (not easy if rudders and centre boards are not to be crashed onto submerged structures), while others hailed the shore for their trollies and sailed their boats onto them in the narrow slip way. Fortunately nobody drowned and all made it safely into the club house for the excellent home-made cake and well-earned mugs of tea.

If you missed the fun this time, look out for the 2019 fixture and come and have a go. You do not have to come with a super boat, it just needs round holes in the back!

Final results:

- 1 4615 Steve Parry & Kevin Stebbing
- 2 7941 Jens Kuhn & Rachel Smith
- 3 8921 Pete Craggs & Phil Nelson

Wild winds at the Aero World Finals

Peter Craggs

Peter Craggs concludes his account of the Aero World Championships at a windy Weymouth

Wednesday wasn't as long a day on the water only at around six hours! But the weather started to cool off and the wind built to the point that races two and three were in a 'breeze' that was perhaps touching 20knts. This seemed to suit me and suddenly I was wondering if the Gold fleet was in reach.

It wasn't. The cut took place on Thursday morning and I was three places (and quite a few points) adrift. I was not particularly disheartened as I figured the Silver fleet would give me some decent racing rather than hanging on to the tail of the Gold fleet.

Which way to go?

Thursday was the first time we had a northerly breeze. That meant a nice reach out and, in theory, back in rather than the 3 mile beat we'd had each day so far. However it did mean that the wind was coming off the land and what the late, great John Merricks described as the 'magical cliffs' (ie it's **very** shift!).

I was feeling quite good about being in fifth position in the first race of the day but somewhere up the second beat the wind shut down and started to swing around. It didn't take long for the



The Aero 7 fleet in action on Wednesday, the last day of the Qualification Series

abandonment flag to appear and after a bit of waiting the wind began to settle in a more westerly direction and we went again.

"I suddenly realised I could cross the whole fleet on port..."

I can't remember much about the re-run race other than I was rather pleased to actually finish fifth! In the next race another boat did an horizon job on the fleet but I was surprised to find that I was second. I had also started gaining (a bit) on the distant leader.

Things got even better in race three.

Half-way up the first beat the boat just to windward randomly capsized (it was actually pretty breezy at this point) and I suddenly realised I could cross the whole fleet on port and so got ahead! Being first round the windward mark gave me decisions and pressure that I'm not used to. Which way to go was suddenly my choice, there were no other boats to guide me. At the leeward gate it felt like I had an entire ocean to choose from. Get it wrong and I would throw away my lead. I could hear the years of childhood race training lectures being re-run in my head and advice about protecting a lead.

It hadn't been relevant then and I've certainly not needed to use it in the intervening couple of decades (plus a bit) but something must have stuck. I hedged my bets by sailing up the middle of the beat.

Hiking harder than I've ever done before I was struggling to see the windward mark against the sun, but as it came into view I was pleased to see a shorten course flag and a committee boat on station waiting to finish us!

It's not a bad feeling finishing first at a Championship, even if it was in the Silver fleet.

Would we race?

Having ended the first day of the Final series with a score line of 5,2,1 I unexpectedly found myself in the lead in the Silver fleet. The scoring was slightly complex in that you added your Qualification Series score (eight races with one discard) to your Final Series. A discard in the Final Series kicked in after the fourth race. One point separated me from the next boat who had had exactly the same scores on Thursday just in a different order. All was set for a complicated and stressful final day.

"The noise of wild ragging sails... filled the air."

Friday had been spoken about in hushed tones all week. Depending on your preferred weather information supplier it was going to be a) a tad breezy or b) **very** windy. As the week progressed all forecasts suggested it would be marginal for sailing and the weather would deteriorate as the day progressed.

Based on the forecast it was clear we wouldn't be venturing out into Weymouth Bay. It was announced the night before that we would be in

Portland Harbour with an early start of 1000. Rumour was that there was no margin for mucking around. Postponing races wouldn't



The Aero 7 fleet in action on Thursday, the first day of the Final Series

happen as the window for racing was small and two races were unlikely. In theory the Tera fleet would race after us so we had to be off the water by 1230.

My drive to the Academy brought me down a steep hill overlooking Chesil Beach and Lyme Bay. It was clear from the white water visible that it was breezy.

Having started the week doing a roaring trade in sun hats the on-site Rooster Sailing shop (one of the main Event Sponsors) were now shipping waterproof jackets at an equally rapid rate!

Hairy launch

Given the points situation I wouldn't have been too disappointed with an abandonment but flags **P** (for Portland Harbour) and **D** soon appeared and we were off, or least it looked like we were. The first few boats out didn't help. A couple of wild broaches and several capsizes **within** the marina added to the tension. More than a few decided that the top of the ramp was their limit and never made it to the water at all. The noise of wild ragging sails (there is no worse sound than that for boosting the nervous tension!) filled the air.

Nor did it help that a few concerned guys from the Academy management team could be seen clutching radios. However despite having more than a few

doubts I went for it. My nearest rival, who happened to be in the berth next to me in the boat park, had gone out early. (*A club mate of his was very keen to tell me this!*) That did focus the mind a bit.

Launching was a bit hairy.

- get the boat afloat, willing helper (standing in the water) holding you head to wind
- jump in
- board in, rudder down a bit.
- pushed off backwards.
- reverse steer round
- gybe and sail out of the marina entrance and into Portland harbour!

Once outside of the marina and into the harbour (Portland Harbour is massive – about 1200 acres) I did wonder what the fuss was about, as it didn't feel as windy as at the end of previous day. It was however pretty bumpy with a steep chop replacing the rolling waves of the bay.

It got windier as we watched the 9s and then the Gold fleet 7s start but it was still manageable. It was cooler, much cooler, than the earlier part of the week. It wasn't really summer any more.



Pitch-pole!

It took two goes to get us away, the first attempt being abandoned midway through, but the small, depleted fleet of 10-12 Aeros (out of about 50 in the Silver fleet) lined up and attacked the beat like it really mattered. About half way up the beat it started to rain and the wind went up a notch (or six) and it was now seriously windy.

"There is nothing like the carrot of winning ...to get you back in the boat."

Rounding the windward mark was no relief, it was straight back downwind on what was a rather strange mix of exhilarating fear. I have probably never been faster in a single-hander but picking a route through the waves was challenging. I had half an eye on the two boats ahead. One had gone off at an odd angle and soon capsized. Proving that you should sail your own race, my first capsize of the week quickly followed that distraction. I was soon back on my way.

There is nothing like the carrot of winning, and the understanding you are going to need to keep going, to get you back in the boat.

Somehow I managed to be in front at the leeward mark, where I recall making the worst rounding ever. I stopped and adjusted my sails, then carried on! The second beat was equally wild. The number of boats scattered around the harbour were increasing as were the size of the waves. The final run was rather lively and all I recall was hitting a wave and being in the water as the transom left the water and the rudder followed the bow down a wave in a spectacular pitch-pole.

Silver fleet success

Once upright I tacked round (gybing seemed like something for another day!) and set my sights on the bottom mark. Once round there it was a nice reach to the finish. I was not surprised to see a collection of flags on the committee boat which told us to head home. There was just the small matter

of another bruising beat to negotiate.

I was pretty certain I was the first Silver fleet boat home but given the number of capsize I wasn't completely sure. Once ashore the results confirmed my win in the Silver fleet.

During racing the wind had apparently gusted to 37 knots, which translates into 42.6 mph (19 m/s, Jens!) or just plain windy. No wonder it felt wild. It was a bold, but correct, call to race (once!) in those conditions and I'm glad I did it. It will live long in the memory.

I think the combination of the ever-building wind and the split fleets played into my hands and it was probably my perfect regatta. Perfectly organised at one of my favourite locations I enjoyed every race (the last two were particularly enjoyable...). We might have lost the sunshine as the week progressed but the dark and stormy clouds of the last day certainly had a Silver lining!

 Just a reminder...

YRISC AGM

This will take place on **Tuesday 5th February** at York RI, Queen Street, starting at 7.30pm. Please come and support your Club.



Cleaning Day is scheduled for **Sunday 3rd March**. All hands, please to get the Club ready for the new season

The **2019 Sailing Programme** will be available soon. Please make a note of your OD duties – and turn up! If you can't do your OD please arrange a swap.

Is your First Aid Certificate up-to-date?

Mike Craggs will put on a one-day **RYA Small Craft First Aid** course if there are enough people interested. Cost approx £40.

Contact Mike on:-

mike_craggs@hotmail.com

This may be your last chance!



A belated
HAPPY NEW YEAR
to all members

