

Monday 11 January 2010

Leigh & Lowton SC Ice Yachting Challenge 2010

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The biggest Open Dinghy Winter Series in the UK was put on hold for Sunday 10th January due to the arrival of deep freeze conditions from Siberia. Some keen sailors could not accept the official abandonment and decided that the conditions were just about perfect to dust off some Ice Yachts. It has to be remembered that this sort of activity must only be undertaken by experienced sailors, the ice was test drilled for depth and all the safety equipment was on hand in addition to a full backup shore team that was experienced enough to cope with any emergency. **DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME!!**

So here was West Zone Topper & top 420 coach Neil Marsden practising his other great yachting passion – he usually has to go to Norway, Poland or Russia to get the right conditions so was pleased to get the opportunity close to home. Neil did a couple of circuits of the lake at tremendous speed and word got out amongst a few other members who, after some tuition were able to take the helm themselves. Bryn (I've never sailed a boat in my life) Griffiths decided it looked like his favourite pastime of motor-racing and persuaded Neil to let him have a bash, after watching him come ashore with a beaming smile & saying "I'll have to get one of these" other local sailors including Tom Keegan, Mike Dean & Mike Barnes decided if he could do it then so could they. Thankfully it was a member of Neil's family that misjudged a mark rounding and crashed the yacht at full belt into one of the marker buoys that was firmly set in the ice – a bit of ingenuity and gaffer tape soon put it back into action.

Having weighed up the competition Neil put out a challenge to all prepared to have a go. Hence the inaugural Leigh & Lowton SC Ice Yachting Challenge was launched. A windward-leeward course between Marks 8 and 3 was set with 2 laps to be sailed and times recorded.

Neil, having confidently set a target time of 3 minutes 58 seconds, was nearly left having to look for excuses as local teenager Tom Keegan clocked a time of 4 minutes and 6 seconds. Times recorded for the rest of the team below.

After the racing, two of the local Zone squaddies Hadyn Griffiths and Chris Barnes had a bash. How many of their mates at school will be able to say they went ice yachting at the weekend?

Neil had difficulty getting the ice yachts back off Tom and Bryn such was their enthusiasm to get more practise, we can say with confidence that both are scouring eBay for any that may come on the market!!

Next Ice Yachting event at Leigh & Lowton – well we'll just have to wait and see but there will be an attempt to kick-start the Topsy Icicle Winter Series next Sunday 17th January.

Check out the action on these two videos on [Youtube](#) and [Yahoo Video](#) and click on the image in the top left of this News item for a superb high resolution photo.

RESULTS:

1st Neil Marsden 3 min 58 seconds

2nd Tom Keegan 4 06

3rd Malcolm Marsden 4 55

4th Hannah Marsden 6 02

5th Mike Barnes 6 13

6th Mike Dean 7 54

7th Paul Reid 10 19

8th Bryn Griffiths 10 23

9th Robin Marsden 14 23

- Tim Yeates -