

420 Weymouth Selector, 14 & 15 March 2009

The 2009, 420 selector series started at Weymouth with 45 teams eager to test their winter training skills. The first selector of three weekends each with 6 races, was held alongside the Olympic Class National Ranker. This was a great chance for the main of those aspiring sailors to see the next step in action.

With 4 races scheduled for Saturday, the fleet departed for racing in Weymouth Bay, once out there they found a shifty 18Knt North Westerly. Race 1 got underway under a Blue Peter and James Hayward and Tim Carter were first to the windward mark who then proceeded to 2 sail the reach as the breeze was up. However, by the first leeward gate Phil Sparks and Ben Gratton had taken the lead which they held to the finish, chased by Ben Palmer and Konrad Weaver and Rebecca Kalderon and Rosie Sibthorp.

Race 2 produced the first black flag start of the weekend and Matt Rainback and Simon Foskett took a port end flyer and crossed the whole fleet, taking a nice lead on to the reach. The wind then proceeded to die to about 10 Knts leaving many sailors hunting for power. Sparks/ Gratton worked hard downwind and by halfway up the beat had taken the lead, from Rainback/ Foskett with Timothy O'Laoire and Brian Kelleher in third.

Race 3 started in fresh conditions, half way up the first beat there was a significant left shift which meant that many who had gone left were smelling of roses. Again Sparks/ Gratton took the lead with Rainback/ Foskett finishing second from Stephen Tiernan and Dermott McMorrough.

The final race of the day, with the wind back up to 18Knts started under a Blue Peter and the fleet managed to just stay behind the line. Palmer/ Weaver managed to work the shifts to lead the fleet at the windward mark, which they held throughout the race from a chasing Sparks/ Gratton and Rainback/ Foskett coming in third. The fleet tired yet exhilarated from their sail, poured into the Harbour and quickly packed up to get some rest. Over night Sparks and Gratton lead with three points from Rainback/ Foskett and Palmer/ Weaver.

Sunday dawned very differently with a patchy 2Knts. Frank Newton (PRO) raised the AP and proceeded into the harbour to see if some wind would kick in. By 11:00 a WSW 5Kts had established itself and the fleet were sent afloat. Race 5 got away cleanly, with Matt Foskett and Adam Walker leading the fleet around the windward mark, however, at the leeward gate Imogen and Hermione Stanley took the right-hand gate as the wind had clocked to the left and lead by the next windward mark to the finish, chased by Mike Wood and Hugh Brayshaw and Rainback/ Foskett.

Race 6 took two attempts to get underway and in the final minute there was a significant left shift leaving the line very port biased. As the gun went the fleet tacked on to port, with those on the left looking good. Half way up the beat the wind proceeded to go even more left, helping out anyone who had made their way to the left and leaving those on the right of the fleet marooned. Josh Pistol and Piers Strong lead at the windward mark, followed by Rob Lehane and Iralaith Kennedy who were, unfortunately to be adjudged OCS. The second run was a game of cat and mouse with Pistol/ Strong just keeping Palmer/ Weaver at bay. The race finished with Pistol/ Strong taking the bullet from Palmer/ Weaver and Tim Gratton and Ed Riley coming in third.

Overall the first Ladies were the Stanley sisters and first overseas going to Tiernan/ McMorrough in fourth overall. Sunday's results compressed the top three with Sparks and Gratton winning the weekend by two points from Rainback/ Foskett who were also two points ahead of Palmer/ Weaver. The Selector series is now finely balanced with only 3pts between the top three boats, the excitement and pressure builds into the next selector in Largs on the 4th and 5th of April.

Miles Palmer thanked WPSNA for hosting a wonderful event, Frank Newton for getting 6 good races completed over the weekend and the safety team for ably coping with the conditions.