

LIGHTNING 368 RUM AND MINCE PIE OPEN, WEST OXFORDSHIRE SAILING CLUB

SEASON FINALE SATURDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2014

WRITTEN BY CAROLINE KEY

With the threat of Hurricane Abigale due to scupper our seasonal finale this year, when many other classes around the country had cancelled their opens, West Oxfordshire Sailing Club proceeded. With an almost déjà vu moment, with a lower than usual turnout of 7 visitors joining the fleet of 5 home boats to a virtually flat calm lake. The wind fortunately filled in for the 11.30 start, gradually increasing throughout the day to a gusty last race of 20-25 MPH, thankfully not the 41-45 MPH predicted.

Race one saw newcomer to the fleet Spike Daniels take an early lead, after taking full advantage of the port biased start line, closely followed by Penny Yarwood and local junior Alex Baxter returning to the fleet in a borrowed boat for the day. With his local knowledge of the lake, Alex soon overhauled both Penny and Spike to take the lead, only to lose it again following a dip into the lake when his tiller extension got caught up in his buoyancy aid. Further down the fleet, John Claridge, Caroline Key and Clive Evans were battling it out for 4th, 5th and 6th positions. The other local juniors of Sophie Kitching and James Nichol were giving the other fleet regulars of Lee Bratley, Jason Gallagher and Mark Godden a run for their money, with the juniors coming out on top in that battle. Spike went on to win race one with Alex second and Penny third.

After a hearty pasta lunch and mince pies, the fleet took to the water for race two. With the south westerly wind direction increasing slightly, the heavens opened, it was going to be a very damp afternoon. After a capsize before the start and struggling to get back into her boat in time, our treasurer Emma decided to call it a day and take advantage of the clubs recently refurbished changing rooms and hot showers. In this race, Alex took the lead from John and Penny, who remained in these positions for the whole race, with the only battles and place changes taking place throughout the rest of the fleet.

During the brief interval between the second and third race, Caroline and Clive manage to persuade Graham our race officer of the day, to change the course, as the wind had altered direction slightly. We now had a beat the virtual length of the lake and a screaming reach back the other way, which with the strengthening winds, I think everyone enjoyed. Spike again took an early lead in this race ahead of Alex and John, but Alex was soon seen leading the fleet on lap two. John gradually lost out to Clive who took third place. The other juniors also did well in the strengthening wind conditions, with the only casualty of the race being our Chairman Jason, who had to retire following injuring his shoulder.

With this being the last event of the year, the current leader of the travellers Robbie Claridge securing the win at the last event and unable to attend the final race, the battle was for 2nd and 3rd overall. With the absence of Paul White to defend second position, Penny's results were sufficient to leapfrog Paul in the overall standings to take second overall. Following the success of Gold and Silver fleets at the Nationals, it was also decided to introduce a trophy courtesy of Jason, to the leader of the silver fleet in the series, although also absent at this event, this was awarded to Bryan Westley from Aldridge Sailing Club.

Thanks go to Graham and his team of race assistants for organising the days sailing and Carole, assisted by Debby for the excellent lunch and refreshments. Nobody opened the bottle of rum though. Never mind, it will keep!!

All the visitors also commented on the new changing room facilities and expressed what a great improvement they made to the club.

Results

1st Alex Baxter West Oxfordshire Sailing Club

2nd Spike Daniels Oxford Sailing Club

3rd John Claridge Royal Lynton Yacht Club