

Royal Lymington Yacht Club: 30th/31st July 2016.

(6 races on quadrilateral courses: beat, short reach, run, short reach to leeward mark, beat back up through a windward gate)

Saturday:

Race 1 started in a very light and fickle northerly and Caroline started at the favoured pin end which looked good for about 10 seconds until a puff from the right lifted Spike and John into the lead. Heading into the shore to dodge the tide; the pair were then becalmed while Caroline and Bryan picked up a gust that lifted them all the way to the windward mark. Caroline's lead was never threatened, while Spike John and Bryan scrapped for 2nd place, with John reading the shifts successfully on the second beat to comfortably secure it with Spike 3rd and Bryan in 4th.

A short pause after race one then allowed a westerly to set in which built quickly to about 8 knots. With the tide under us on the beat, judgement of the lay lines was crucial, and on the first beat Caroline judged to perfection to lead with John very close and Spike in 3rd; with the pack very close behind. Running against the tide compressed the fleet and the leaders trying to cheat the tide on port tube gybe were undone by a wind shift and gust from the south. Hugh spotted it first but Spike soon switched on to it and gybed, so was able to claim water from Caroline and John by the leeward mark, with the pack still very close. In a flurry of close tacks to get through the windward gate on the 2nd beat, Spike was shuffled back to 3rd behind Caroline and John; and though still very close, positions remained, with Bryan coming in 4th again.

The wind built to 14 to 16 knots for the 3rd race and Spike got a lead to stick and won from John and Caroline with Bryan claiming another 4th.

Sunday:

A very light northerly died completely even before the first race, and a half hour postponement allowed a westerly to set in which very quickly built to 12 knots and then steadily past 15 as the races progressed to set up great planing reaches. Failing to judge a lay line again, Spike let his early slight lead on the beat go to John, Caroline and Jason. Waves were now a feature on the runs against the tide and Spike slid through to take a very narrow lead on the first run.. The lead was held and the battle for second saw John sail Caroline beyond the lay line to the finish to squeeze her out to 3rd place. The scores had then become very close.

In race five, Spike, now paranoid about lay lines, tacked under it on the first beat, with the intention of ducking Caroline who was just on his weather quarter. But, losing sight of her in mid-tack and hesitating, emerged to find himself on the wrong side of a clear port and starboard situation and peeled away into a 720. Emerging from that incident and trying to cross Hugh, he was again on the wrong side of the equation and peeled away into another 720 and was then flat last. The run against the tide again came to his rescue and he was through to 3rd by the leeward mark. Early on the second beat Caroline's kicker broke and

she had to retire to effect repairs. John was well clear and when on to win the race with Spike settling into second and Jason in 3rd.

In the countdown to the start of the last race, Caroline found herself up tide and on the wrong side of the committee boat as the gun went, and appeared to have given herself an uphill task to take the overall.

Over-standing again, but this time taking John with him, Spike lead at mark one. With Spike defending the inside, John decided to turn the run into two broad reaches and successfully planed into the leeward mark just a boat length ahead. Going through the gate the pair were bow to bow and Spike found himself the right side of a port and starboard for a change and John tacked away and out into favourable tide. Spike went with him and was able to take him to the lay line; but the gap was still barely more than a couple of boat lengths all the way down to the leeward mark.. The broad reaching tactic wasn't used again by John and Spike had just enough of a gap by the leeward mark that old-fashioned covering was now possible. Caroline's mis-fortune continued with a capsize and Bryan broke his run of 4th places by posting a 3rd with Hugh in 4th.

All of the races were run against a backdrop of clear blues skies and unbroken sunshine; as is normal in the Solent ;). Thanks are due to the members of The Royal Lymington YC and Lymington Town Sailing Club who gave up a sunny, windy weekend to crew committee boats, rescue boats and manage launching trolleys on the slipway. Thank you.

Next stop in the tour is close to the birthplace of the Lightning at Oxford SC for the Inland Champs on 13th August.

By Spike Daniels