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Fireball Open at Staunton Harold Sailing Club



By Grahame Newton on 28 Mar

24-25 March 2012

Nine race series completed

The 'delayed' annual SHSC Fireball open took place over the weekend of the 24th & 25th March and competitors could not have wished for a better weekend. A very wise decision by Tim Saunders to delay the event from October last year due to low water levels, saw 9 visitors join the 8 home boats to form a very competitive fleet of 17 boats all of whom welcomed the site of a nearly 'full pond'.

Water levels last year dropped to about just '50%' quoted Tim "so we had no choice but to re-schedule" and what a good move it proved to be as levels are now at over 95% providing plenty of room on the 140 acre reservoir for some close and excellent racing. The weekend forecast of light winds but warm sunshine combined with a 10 race programme would have been quite daunting for many a PRO but SHSC had installed the job to member and Olympic race official Howard Jones who, along with a very competent team pulled off an impressive feat and 9 very close fought races took place over the weekend.

Competitors were greeted with some mist and a light breeze early Saturday morning, but by the time the sweet smell of bacon & egg cobs had drifted off, so out came the sun and a gentle 5 knot breeze.

The format was 10 short races with a mix of traditional 'round the cans' and alternating with windward-leeward's just to test everyone's patience and nerves as rarely did the lead boat round the windward mark finish ahead by the time of rounding the leeward mark.

Race one saw Derian and Andy set the pace to take the win, proving the drive from Chew was worth it, they were closely followed by Ian Priest with local SHSC crew Rich Pepperdine in 2nd and sister Becky Priest and current FB chair Tim Saunders in 3rd.

Race two was a windward-leeward in a shifting breeze causing many place changes during the race, Ian Priest took the bullet with local hot married 'lightweights' Andy & Lesley Foskett close in 2nd and Chelmarsh visitors Carter and Wilkinson 3rd having finished 7th in race 1! It was clear by now consistency was the order of the day as beats and runs were like a game of watery 'snakes and ladders'!

Race 3 'back round the cans' suited Derian who scored another bullet and staking, they were the pair to beat. John 'Mad dog' Curzon and Pete Elver who lead for most of the race just pipped on the line to finish 2nd and the Chelmarsh duo posted another 3rd.

Race 4 saw yet another race winner with Alex Taylor and Geoff Edwards taking the gun after 'mad dog' got a blinding start just a boat length over only to not spot the infamous 'black flag' so they retired to the bar whilst local pair Grahame Newton & Mark Stevens battled all the way round with Derian who just got the better of them on the line and giving her a 2nd and Grahame 3rd.

Race 5 saw a repeat with Alex taking the win from Grahame 2nd and Ian Priest 3rd.

Race 6, the last on Saturday, saw yet another new race winner with 'local light-weights' Andy & Lesley Foskett winning convincingly from Alex 2nd and Grahame 3rd this made it all very very close as the crews all headed for the shore and evening meal.

After much head scratching and calculations to include just one discard at this stage it meant Derian & Andy had the overnight lead. It was all very very tight though as along with Derian, winning by just a single point, from Ian Priest and Grahame Newton. The competitors retired to the bar for the normally 'what happened' and 'that shift' discussion and all stayed for a 'Tex Mex' treat put on by the club with 'spicy chilli' and some red hot peppers not to be tried by the 'faint hearted'... for those who did we are told it was a 'very wet and windy night'! Enough said! At least it helped boost bar sales!

Sunday morning woke us with bright blue skies and a building breeze... clocks went forward so little sleep for some including the resident PRO who sacrificed his warm luxury home for a camper van in the club car park to ensure 'the team' were up early and ready for the challenge ahead.

More bacon and eggs scent drifted over the dinghy park and the scheduled 10:30am start for race 7 always looked doubtful. However the PRO Howard managed to conjure up all his powers and arrange for a nice settled 8 knots breeze to accompany the now warm sunny skies as the fleet started a little later than planned.

Race 7 saw Andy & Lesley take another win pushing them ever closer to the title with Alex continuing where he left off late Saturday and in 2nd and 'mad dog' very aware of the Black flag now, came in 3rd.

Race 8 saw Mad Dog Curzon & Pete battle all race with Grahame & Mark as the fleet behind 'parked up' as Terry Forbes decided the 'last minute port tack at the windward mark was not as good an idea as he first thought' and promptly 'parked the fleet' allowing the John and Grahame to sail away. Grahame & Mark just took the win closely followed by John & Pete with Andy & Les 3rd.

Race 9 became the last race of the day a one-lap beat / run sprint to the line and it could have gone anyway as at one stage 7 boats lay level on the run down to the finish. This produced yet another new race winner as J

Carter & G Wilkinson took line honours very closely followed by 'well the whole fleet' with 2 local boats new to the 'sharp end' of Rob Watson & Simon Forbes 2nd and Simon Kelsall & Buzz 3rd.

Grahame and Mark snook in a 4th just giving them the open title by a single point from Andy & Lesley 2nd with Derian & Andy 3rd.

So we had 9 race over two days in glorious sunshine with a full reservoir, an amazing 6 different race winners run by Olympic standard race management and everyone agreed a great time was had by all. As we are celebrating 50 years of the Fireball, many '50' related prizes were given out causing many a helm or crew to contemplate the truth about their actual age!

Watch out for this event next year you'd be mad to miss it!

Overall Results:

Pos	Boat Name	ICR	Helm	Crew	Club	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12	R13	R14
1st	Fly by Wire	14966	Grahame Newton	Mark Stevens	Staunton Harold Sailing Club	5	-6	4	3	2	3	-6	1	4	22				
2nd	On The Edge	14935	Andy Foskett	Lesley Foskett	Staunton Harold Sailing Club	4	2	-10	8	4	1	1	3	-11	23				
3rd	Southpaws	14941	Derian Scott	Andy Scott	Chew Valley Lake SC	1	4	1	2	5	-6	5	-11	5	23				
4th	Mashed Potato	14909	Ian Priest	Richard Peperdine	Scaling Dam / SHSC	2	1	5	4	3	7	-8	4	-10	26				
5th		15017	Alex Taylor	Geoff Edwards	Budworth SC	-8	-9	8	1	1	2	2	7	8	29				
6th	Bossy Three	15073	Becky Priest	Tim Saunders	Staunton Harold Sailing Club	3	5	-7	5	-7	4	4	6	6	33				
7th		14977	J Carter	G Wilkinson	Chelmarsh SC	7	3	3	6	8	-9	7	-9	1	35				
8th	Three	14864	John Curzon	Pete Elver	Staunton Harold Sailing Club	(DNC)	7	2	(OCS)	6	5	3	2	12	37				
9th	Chuffy Shunter	14370	Daren Fasey	Colin Davis	Staunton Harold Sailing Club	6	-10	6	7	8	10	-12	5	7	49				
10th		15004	Rob Watson	Simon Forbes	Staunton Harold Sailing Club	9	8	-11	-11	11	8	9	8	2	55				
11th		15002	Simon Kelsall	Tom Burrows	Staunton Harold Sailing Club	11	11	-13	-14	10	11	11	10	3	67				
12th	All Balls and No Fire	14771	Terry Forbes	Lol Hayward	Staunton Harold Sailing Club	13	12	12	9	-14	12	10	-15	14	82				
13th		14660	R stone	Alex Hall	Burton SC	10	-16	14	13	-15	13	14	13	9	86				
14th		14430	Joe Smith	Barry smith	thornbury SC	14	-15	9	12	12	14	-16	12	13	86				
15th		13972	V.Hardingham	Rachel	Harensam	12	14	-15	10	-17	15	13	14	15	93				
16th		14636	Andrew McEvoy	Ollie Stone	Burton SC	15	13	16	16	13	16	(DNC)	(DNC)	(DNC)	107				
17th		14224	Sam Brooke	Jordan Moretta	Burton SC	16	-17	-17	15	16	17	15	16	16	111				

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