

2019 GP14 Ulster Championship, Lough Foyle Yacht Club

Lough Foyle Yacht Club, located on the banks of the River Foyle at Culmore Point, hosted the 2019 Ulster Championships attracting 27 competitors from not only all over Ireland but as far from Poole in Dorset, England.

After 2 general recalls and the race officer having to raise the black flag before race 1 had begun, the fleet started and headed off towards the windward mark. As the fleet were getting used to the dominating tide, Keith and Alan showed they were not to be messed with on their home turf and used their local knowledge to navigate to the front of the fleet by the windward mark. Closely followed by the English Raiders, Sam and Andy. 3rd place and 1st silver went to the young pairing of Adrian and Ed who had a fantastic race and were extremely unlucky not to turn 3rd into 2nd as they crossed the line almost simultaneously with Sam and Andy. 1st Bronze fleet sailor went to the new pairing of David and Elysia.

Race 2 commenced after only 1 general recall! By this time the tide had increased and the offshore breeze had started to shift significantly. Again, local boat Adrian and Ed used their local knowledge to get to the right and correct side of the course early. Shortly after the start a nice 20' starboard shift came down the racecourse giving Adrian and Ed the largest lead the fleet has seen for a while! They sailed away by themselves and won the race by the best part of a leg! Behind these guys Keith and Alan and Shane and Damian had a battle for 2nd and 3rd. Being won on the last leg by Keith and Alan. Mathew and Richard Street had a great race finishing just behind Shane and Damian in 4th place and 1st Bronze.

Race 3 saw a similar set of conditions with slightly decreasing tide but still large offshore shifts. This time it was Shane and Damian who dominated the first beat and gained an impressive lead. Behind them the fleet changed positions in the varying shifts. 2nd was taken by Sam and Andy followed by Keith and Alan. Josh and Meg sailed through the fleet to finish an impressive 4th place.

With Saturdays 3 races over the most important race of the day kicked off, the beer race into the club! The sailors packed up and headed up the hill to The Magnet Bar who had prepared some 1st class food for the sailors. We even had a honouree visit from Curley Morris who wasn't sailing due to hip op. Curley will be back for the Nationals, watch out!

Day 2 came around and you could definitely tell who had been to the Magnet bar till 1 in the morning. Keith and Alan were the first boat on the water and had set the boat up for what seemed was going to be a windy day. The fleet ran out into the tide in a considerable 15 knot breeze. With the tide pushing the boats to windward a few boats were slightly pre mature for race 4 and two boats were given the first black flags of the event. Alistair and Andy and Connor and Barry Twohig hit the line a little too early and were disqualified. The fleet carried on up to the windward mark in what was again, extremely shifty and tough conditions to sail in. This meant for allot of place changes and not one boat could let their guard down. The wind had died slightly and the Race Officer decided to shorten the course at second leeward mark. This left Shane and Damian to take the win, followed by ex-Olympian Ger Owen and Mel Morris who used the light conditions to sail through the fleet. Keith and Alan secured 3rd putting them on equal points with Shane and Damian. It now looked like a 2 horse race for the lead with both boats having a 6 point lead to Sam and Andy in 3rd place. Michael and Michelle secured 4th place and first Silver.

Race 5 commenced and was met at the gybe mark by a lovely 18 knots squall. This helped Sam and Andy who managed to hold onto the kite for a little longer than JP and

Carolyn which set them up for the win. Shane and Andy won the battle for 2nd against Keith and Alan. This put them just a point ahead of Keith and Alan going into the last race. Doire and Andrew had an impressive race to 4th position. David and Alysia had another great race finishing 6th and 1st Bronze.

The last raced commenced in a light breeze. It looked like the 22 year old Duffin had much better pace in the lighter winds as Sam and Andy did what they could to fight for the lead. Another win would put them in contention but at this stage it all depended on how both Shane and Damian and Keith and Alan did in the last race. In the light and shifty wind JP and Carolyn showed serious speed as well as Ger and Mel who took 2nd and 3rd respectively. Doire and Andrew held onto 4th in front of Shane and Damian and Keith and Alan who were battling further down the fleet for the lead.

The final race was complete and again the race to the club commenced with a serious ebbing tide flying out of the Foyle. It took a while for the boats to get through this in the dying wind. The boats came ashore and the maths started! On joint points Sam and Andy took the lead from Shane and Damian due to number of 1sts and 2nds. Following behind by only 1 point was Keith and Alan.

Thanks to Lough Foyle Yacht Club and the many volunteers for putting on a great event. Thanks to Thompson NI for sponsoring the event and James Peter Hockley for organising the best event of the season so far! The next event is the Leinsters at Dun Laoghaire on the 12th to the 14th of July.

