

GP14 Championship of Ireland

A very windy weekend saw the 3:rock 2019 GP14 Championship of Ireland restricted to 5 races after Sunday racing was blown out. Liam Dineen PRO had no choice yesterday morning but to call a halt with a steady 20+ and regular gusts over 28kts.

With strong wind forecast for Sat and Sun, Liam amended SI to get 3 races in on Friday.

With Worlds set for Skerries in 2020, the event included gate starts to help prepare both the fleet and race management team. A couple of practice gate starts were the order of the day before the Championship got under way.

Shane MacCarthy was back in the fleet and reunited with Damien Bracken after a summer campaigning a Solo in the UK. We also saw last year's Champion Ross Kearney (RNIYC) team up with Andy Thompson.

Recently crowned UK National Champion Sam Watson was across and teamed up with Lough Foyle James Peter Hockley. South Staffs Jane Kearney, traded her crew position to take the tiller with new crew Ollie Goodhead. Jane crewed for husband Ross in Sligo last year when the pair took the Championship.

Also in the mix was multiple Championship winners Tim Corcoran & Brendan Brogan (Sligo SC) . Tim is now living in Spain but Skerries holds good memories as he was the Champion last time event was held here 2016.

RCYC Alex Barr & Richard Leonard have made a big impact since joining the fleet this season and would be expected to be in the mix come Sunday. To highlight the strength of the Class at the moment, the Gold fleet also included former Irish Champions John & Donal McGuinness as well as Keith Louden & Alan Thompson and Alan Blay & Michelle Rowley all race winners at this level.

With plenty of wind forecast, it would be interesting to see if new Gold fleet member Peter Boyle and dad Stephen could continue their good form from the previous weeks UK Nationals where 17yr Peter took a very credible 7th place overall.

The first 2 races on Friday were very tight with plenty of windshift and very close racing with Shane MacCarthy and Tim Corcoran taking the victories. Race 3 saw wind pick up considerably and some significant wind shift saw Youghal Adrian Lee & Ed Coyne make the most of it and get well clear to take his first ever Nationals race win.

With 3 different race winners and such close racing, the leader board saw Shane MacCarthy lead from Jane Kearney who had 3 consistent races by virtue of the race win on 12pts. Tim Corcoran was in 3rd with Ross Kearney 4th both on 16pts, Alex Barry 5th, Peter Boyle 6th and Sam Watson in 7th.

It was great to see Curly Morris back on the water again after his hip operation. The newly elected International Class President raced the first 2 races on Friday, finishing 10th in race 2 to earn the right to be pathfinder for race 3. He duly got the race off and running and peeled off to a well deserved rest ashore.

Saturday dawned and with it a lot more wind. Jack Roy, President of Irish Sailing paid a visit and joined Liam Dineen on Committee boat for a couple of races. At Friday nights GP14 Class AGM held in Skerries Sailing Club it was formally announced Jack will be IRO for 2020 GP14 Worlds next year.

Liam and his safety boats headed out to see the conditions and requested that the fleet stay ashore. The delay was only about 45min and with a little trepidation the fleet eventually launched with the breeze a steady 18kts with gust to 22kts.

While 3 races were planned, Liam and his team did very well to get 2 races in before the conditions just became a little too much.

Ross Kearney pushed himself into contention and ahead of his wife Jane with a 3 and a bullet. Shane MacCarthy however strengthened his lead with a 1, 2. Sutton Dinghy Clubs Peter Boyle revelled in the conditions to jump into 4th after a 2nd and a 6th. It could have been even better save a capsized on last mark to drop to 6th from 3rd.

The second race in particular saw the fleet hit with strong gusts with many of the fleet deciding not to fly spinnakers on the reaches. There were plenty of capsizes and a handful of retirements but no damage sustained.

With the wind now consistently at 22kts and huge gusts nearing 30kts and not looking likely to abate, the PRO sent the fleet in.

With Sunday blown out, that ultimately proved to be the event done and dusted. With discard applied, Shane's results had put him 4pts clear of the improving Ross Kearney. That last mark capsized ultimately proved costly for Peter Boyle who had to settle for 4th. However his fine showing meant he took 3rd Irish and his first Irish Sailing (bronze) medal. Tim (5th), Sam (6th) and Alex (7th) all finished on 21pts.

Silver Fleet was won by South Staffs Jane Kearney & Ollie Goodhead with Sutton Dinghy Clubs David Johnston & Callum Maher 2nd and Youghal Adrian Lee & Ed Coyne 3rd.

Youghal Jack Buttimer crewed by Matthew Street (Blessington) took the Bronze Fleet.

The Masters Trophies were won by John McGuinness (over 50) and Alistair Duffin (over 60).

As promotion for the 2020 GP14 Worlds, there was a raffle on Sunday for FREE ENTR, with all those entering by midnight Sat 17th getting into the draw. With I believe 65 entries now registered the winner of the FREE Entry was Greystones Youth Ciaran Keogh.

A great event run by Skerries and super preparation for 2020 Worlds included loads of coffee and scones before racing, a smashing BBQ on Saturday night and rounded off with trays of sandwiches for prizegiving.

Commodore Kathryn Collins, GP14 Class President David Cooke and Doire Shiels Skerries Sailing Secretary presided over the prizegiving.

Report : Andy Johnston



