

LASER 4.7 GRAND PRIX AT NORTHAMPTON

Report from Martin Hayes / UKLA

Photographs courtesy of Jonathon Nainby-Luxmoore

40 Laser 4.7 sailors met at Northampton S.C. for the 1st Grand Prix / Ladder event of 2006. Competitors had travelled from as far as Teesdale, the Isle of Wight and Restronguet. The sailors were met with sun and a blustery Force 4 - 5 winds. David Hand, the Race Officer, set a P shaped course to make the most of the water and give some exciting reaches and runs.

The 1st race on Saturday got away with a spectacular capsize from David Harper at the port end causing chaos on the crowded pin. Kelsey Suggitt and Martin Hayes battled for 1st and 2nd at the windward mark. The leading pack of eight boats pulled away from the rest of the fleet with places changing frequently on the shifty beats. Kelsey held off all challengers with Chris Gibson coming through into 2nd and Patrick Liddicoat having a consistent race in 3rd.



The 2nd race saw the wind increase, which caught out many of the less experienced competitors. There were also four sailors over at the start and another five disqualified for missing the gate on later laps. This resulted in only 15 finishers. David Hand had changed the course so that there was an exciting long reach across the width of the lake starting with a gybe, which had even some of the experienced sailors in trouble. Chris Gibson led this race from start to finish, pulling out an impressive gap on the others. Kelsey Suggitt sailed an extremely fast race to claw back a 2nd place finish after being 25th at the windward mark. Patrick Liddicoat continued his consistent form with another 3rd.

The final race on Saturday found a depleted fleet of only 25 starters. Yet again, Chris Gibson showed the way, but a capsize at the gybe mark let Kyle Grant through. These two had close racing for the next 30 minutes with Chris Gibson coming through to take honours. Oliver White having earlier entertained the parents in the clubhouse to a spectacular capsize as he left the beach, sailed through to take 3rd. Kelsey Suggitt continued to show her pace and despite a swim at the gybe mark, finished a good 4th.

Racing got underway on the Sunday with a somewhat steadier but stronger South Westerly. The first start had a shorter line with good starts at either end. Shane Terry rounded the windward in front of Chris Gibson. However Chris soon established his superiority when Shane capsized. Even Chris was finding the conditions hard as he capsized rounding the windward mark on the final lap. Chris finished 1st assuring overall victory. However, a 2nd place from Kyle Grant and a 5th from Kelsey Suggitt left it all to play for in the final race. Oliver White finished close behind in 3rd place. Patrick Liddicoat did not have his best race due to a kamikaze tack when he missed the toe strap, flying out of his boat headfirst.



In the final race, Chris Gibson led from start to finish scoring four 1st places out of five races. Kyle Grant was in 2nd for most of the race but a flying last lap saw Kelsey Suggitt overtake Kyle, to ensure overall 2nd place. David Harper scored his second 4th of the weekend but it was too late as he had to carry an OCS from Saturday. Cameron Smith had a flying start to his season he sailed consistently with a best result of 4th to see him taking 4th overall and 1st Junior. For a number of sailors this was their first major event and although the conditions were very tough, most gained an enormous amount from the event. Liam Gardner was awarded the Endeavour prize for battling on and finishing every race. Thanks to Northampton S.C for a superbly organised event.



Final Results:

1 st	Chris Gibson	Royal Victoria Y.C.	
2 nd	Kelsey Suggitt	Barnt Green S.C.	1 st Girl
3 rd	Kyle Grant	Royal Victoria Y.C.	
4 th	Cameron Smith	Chelmarsh S.C.	1 st Junior
5 th	Joanna Ireland	Restronguet S.C.	
6 th	Patrick Liddicoat	Bewl Valley S.C.	
7 th	Miles Ashton	Starcross S.C.	
8 th	Oliver White	Papercourt S.C.	
9 th	Martin Hayes	Blithfield S.C.	
10 th	Craig McCarthy	Burton S.C.	