

RYA Youth Nationals 2018, Largs SC, 30 March–6 April

Reports by Chloe Barr and Jake Farren-Price

This year's RYA Youth Nationals took place at Largs SC in the week after Easter. A total of 46 Radial Boys, 18 Radial Girls and 13 Standard sailors were among those competing at the event.

Radial Girls

The first and second days of the event were abandoned early as all the forecasts agreed that the wind was going to build. As it was 30–50knts and snowing by lunchtime on the first day, the decision was appreciated by all the sailors. Day two brought similar disappointment with snow and 25–35knts being read by the poor volunteers on ribs – racing was abandoned at midday.

Day three started with an hour postponement, and the wind seemingly built along with the snow. The Race Committee decided to launch the Standards after the postponement to see if they could handle the conditions. With a few capsizes on the way out, the Standards started their first race of the Youth Nationals with the Radials launching soon after. The conditions were far from ideal with snow still falling and a wind range of about 10–28knts. After a pretty uneventful start, the first race saw Anya Haji-Michael and Iona Dixon leading in from the right and Daisy Collingridge and Chloe Barr from the left. Barr made it around the mark first but hit it on the way and had to do turns. Dixon and Collingridge were not far behind and overtook her on the reach. On the second beat, Wingeatt took a large right shift to gain a significant lead which she held till the end, followed by Barr and Dixon.

Race 2 was won from the start with Collingridge and Matilda Nicholls getting away from the pin and tacking on the first shift. The battle for third was between Dixon, Wingeatt and Barr. The second beat took Collingridge, Nicholls, Barr and Dixon right and Wingeatt left. Barr overtook Wingeatt with Dixon just behind. A bit of pressure downwind spread the front four out. The race finished in the order of Collingridge, Nicholls, Barr and Wingeatt.

After a miserable sail out in a rainstorm on day four, the fleet had to wait about half an hour for some wind to fill back in, which it did from the west with around 10–15knts. The first race of the day (Race 3) was won again by Collingridge from the start.

Race 4 on Thursday brought another rainstorm which Dixon took full advantage of and rounded the mark miles ahead, followed by Alex Schonrock and Wingeatt. During the second beat, the wind began to drop leaving some nasty sharp chop stopping many sailor's dead; the downwind brought even less wind, but the fleet were too far around the race course to abandon. Dixon won with a large lead, followed by Schonrock and the Wingeatt.

Race 5 came after an hour or so of waiting for the wind to settle – which it did from the south with about 12–18knts. Barr won the pin but was beaten by Molly Sacker to the windward mark. Collingridge took the left-hand gate and went right upwind to overtake Barr. The race was won by Sacker, followed by Collingridge and then Barr.

In Race 6, the majority of the fleet went left up the first beat, but Barr rang the bell on the right to round the windward mark first, followed by Collingridge. The second beat started off not too shifty until a large bit of pressure came in from the left bringing a large left shift. This left Collingridge and Barr fighting from the middle, and Nicholls, Schonrock and Wingeatt reaching in from the left. Barr just about held onto her lead, with Nicholls and Schonrock rounding just behind. Barr won, followed by Nicholls and then Schonrock.

The forecast looked like it could be too windy to sail on day five, but once at the club the race area seemed fine. At about five minutes before the D flag went up, someone's boat flew off their trolley, but the fleet were still sent out. Once at the race course, competitors were met with 20–35 knots; the windiest day sailed in so far.

In Race 7, Dixon, Barr and Nicholls were first off the line, with Dixon taking advantage of the Committee Boat bias. With a few shifts but a general left trend up the beat, Dixon rounded first with Nicholls just behind. However, Nicholls got yellow flagged meaning Barr overtook and Dixon extended her lead. On the second downwind, Dixon capsized and Barr went on to win, with Dixon recovering swiftly to come second and Nicholls third.

The wind was still at full strength in Race 8, with some of the squalls in combination with the chop literally stopping the boat dead. With Dixon starting at the Committee Boat again, and Barr and Nicholls starting middle right, all three popped off the line. Dixon rounded the windward mark first with Barr just behind; a late left shift helped open out their lead, and Nicholls came next. The Committee shortened the course at the next windward mark.

In the end, it was a very tricky week for both the Race Committee and the competitors. Well done to all that stuck it out and competed. First under-17 went to Alex Schonrock and first under-19 to Matilda Nicholls. Overall, Chloe Barr was first, Daisy Collingridge was second and Iona Dixon was third.



Chloe Barr was the winner in the Radial Girls' fleet. Photo: Marc Turner/RYA

Radial Boys

To quote PRO Ian Bullock from his closing video tweet, the RYA Youth Nationals 2018 at Largs SC goes down as 'one of the most challenging week's event anyone can remember'. Forecasts of freezing temperatures taking wind chill down to minus 4 or 5, gale force winds and rain made competitors at time question the choice of a Scottish venue for such an early-in-the-year event.

On day one, the pursuit of a 2018 RYA Youth National Championship title was put on hold for the eager young sailors in Largs, Scotland, when the full racing schedule was postponed. PRO Ian Bullock announced that the weather conditions posed too great a risk for racing to take place as multiple forecasts had the winds above 25knts gusting to over 40knts, with a wind chill of minus 5.

Racing was again foiled on day two by the extreme weather. Forecasts said a windy and gusty morning in Largs was due to die down to sailable conditions that would have allowed for a first taste of 2018 Youth Nationals action. Unfortunately, the prediction never materialized and the weather proved too much to send any sailors afloat.

For the second day in a row, the Race Committee had no choice but to put safety first. They made the decision that keeping the sailors hanging on when the rain and wind was moving in was not in the best interests of the competitors and made the difficult call of AP over A.

On the third day, the wait was a little longer than expected to get racing underway due to the wet and testing weather conditions, but when the action started, there was wind and big gusts. The first bullet of the event went to Tom Renny (Teifi BC/Fishguard Bay YC) who followed up with a fourth place in the Race 2. Similar conditions gave Jake Bowhay (Stokes Bay SC) the opportunity to take the top spot in the second race but seemingly struggling for consistency with a tenth place in the first race. Two second places were enough to take Arthur Fry (Royal Lymington YC) to the top of the fleet at the end of the first day's racing, with Arthur Brown (Royal Burnham YC/Burnham SC) in second place after finishing third in both races. Sailors left for the evening with the promise of a slightly better forecast for day four with the sun finally breaking through in the late afternoon.

On Thursday, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, President of Youth National Championship organisers, the Royal Yachting Association, seemed to be the event's lucky charm as her visit coincided with an upturn in weather as the sun broke through the clouds on the Scottish coast. The Race Committee worked hard all day long to keep the competitors sailing in tricky conditions and all fleets managed at least four races. Without question, the longest day on the water was for the Radial Boys. A massive wind shift during one of the races had meant an abandonment and re-sail. Although the race team had managed to find wind in the course area north of Cumbrae, conditions were somewhat challenging.

Fry started the day by consolidating his standing by winning Race 3, with the other results mimicking the wind and seemingly bouncing around the fleet. George Graham (Burwain SC) took second and Oliver Blackburn (Leigh and Lowton SC) third. Race 4 saw Beck find his form with a first. Brown was second, and with his best result of the week, Scotland's Scott Forbes (Loch Lomond SC) took third. Race 5 was won by Brown, with Graham again showing good form in the lighter shifty conditions with another second place, and Renny was in third. The final race of the day, race six of the series, was won by Bowhay with Krishan Bhogal (Manor Park SC) in second and Beck in third, who suffered the curse of the black flag in race 5. Although confident of their places on the water, the Radial Boys were reluctant to leave the clubhouse as DNCs for the leaders scattered the initial results sheet – it was down to the race teams to analyse their tapes to publish the close results. With finish places being spread throughout the fleet and a very uncertain forecast for the following day, there was a hope that the series could be concluded with more racing.

As Friday dawned cold and wet, Fry was still at the top of the leader board on equal points with Brown, but split on countback, and with points so very tight, everyone knew that the last day was going to produce a nail-biting end to the RYA Youth Nationals 2018 – the top five boats were separated by only four points.

The course was set in the area between Great Cumbrae and the club, and when Arthur Fry crossed the line first in Race 7, a photo on the Twitter feed appeared to strengthen his position, however, all is not always what it seems. There was a little delay for a shorter Race 8 in building breeze and gnarly

chop across the course, which was won by Brown. After a nail-biting wait for the full results to be published, black flags for Fry and Brown in Race 7 meant Bowhay's two third places leapfrogged him to top of the leader board claiming gold ahead of Wales' Tom Renny in silver, with Fry (Royal Lymington YC), unable to match the final day results, in bronze.

Congratulations go to Jake Bowhay (Stokes Bay SC) for putting together a consistent string of results. No one was more surprised to claim Laser Radial Boys' gold than the winner himself, 'I thought of myself as a slight outsider coming in to the event,' Bowhay told the RYA. 'Some of my results in the run up hadn't been as good as I would have liked but everything seems to have come together nicely at the right time.'



The winner in the Radial Boys' fleet was Jake Bowhay. Photo: Marc Turner/RYA

Standard

A total of 13 Standard sailors took the high road to Scotland to fight to become this year's Youth National Champion at Largs SC. It was forecast to be a cold and windy week and it certainly delivered. Little did sailors know that Sunday's brief sunshine and gentle breeze was the only moderate conditions for most of the week and that racing would not commence until Wednesday.

On the first day, high winds and cold weather prompted the PRO to call off all races. Day two was similar, although an indefinite postponement kept sailors hopeful until lunchtime when AP over A was

hoisted. With snow falling and an average of 22knts out on the water, no one was too upset by that decision.

Finally, on day three, after a one-hour postponement, we launched into a northerly breeze. The Standards showed the way for the rest of the classes – big gusts and shifts made the conditions tricky even though the average speed was only 14knts.

Off the first start, everyone was fierce out of the blocks and we had a strong line of boats off the starboard end, with former Youth Radial Champion Jamie Calder leading a pack out to the right after the first left shift off the line. Jake Farren-Price controlled the pack up the left. But it was Jordan Giles who played a conservative beat up the middle and came out first at the top mark. Giles extended away down the reach and first run, until he was hit by a big gust that sent him into the drink. Although he was able to get the boat upright and still keep the lead, the pack was right on his heels going into the second beat. As we were on course C, the Isle of Cumbrae had a big part to play up this second beat and Joe Mullan capitalized on a good left shift coming off the island going into first for the final downwind, with Calder close behind. On the downwind leg, Calder linked the gusts nicely overtaking Mullan for the win. Giles was third.

The second race of the day got off quickly after the first – the wind slightly eased but not the rain or cold. With one minute to go, the wind flicked into a strong lefty and with Milo Gill-Taylor the first to switch onto it, he raced down to the pin end and pulled off a pin-end flyer, leading the majority of the fleet over to the right-hand side of the beat until the next righty came in. At the windward mark, Calder had played the left-hand side well and emerged just ahead of Gill-Taylor. Unfortunately, due to a port–starboard situation, Gill-Taylor was left spinning at the top mark and dropped to the back half of the fleet. By the bottom mark, Calder led the pack out to Cumbrae, and Farren-Price, followed by Giles, split from the fleet to go around the left gate looking downwind. Again, Mullan nailed the left-hand side of the second beat basically sailing parallel to the shore line about 30m out on a ridiculous lift. However, in a bit of *déjà vu*, Calder took Mullan on the final run to take the win. Farren-Price was second. Calder, delighted with his two bullets, said: ‘It was a real day of snakes and ladders, you had to keep your head out of the boat.’

On the fourth day, we finally saw the sun poke through after ten minutes of rain on the way out to course B north of Cumbrae. We were greeted by 10–13knts but with huge gusts and some big shifts too. The first race got underway after a short postponement due to the lack of wind, but we all ended up hiking up the first beat. Off the line, it was a bit of a drag race by the majority of the fleet over to the left-hand side of the course. A few sailors took a hitch out right once they got spat out the back of the front line. Joe Drake sailed a good first beat coming from the right-hand side, but by the top, a nice lefty helped Farren-Price and Mullan squeeze in ahead at mark one. Farren-Price held the lead from there, extending away from the pack with Mullan. Down the run, we were greeted by a closing gate with one of the marks drifting. About 30 seconds before Farren-Price had to make a decision about

how to round, a safety rib quickly dragged the mark into a suitable position. From here, the race was more of a procession with a few shifts to play up the beat. Lewis Smith managed to climb into third place and the result for Race 3 was Farren-Price, Mullan and then Smith. Mullan was sailing a very consistent series with three seconds to his name.

Race 4 saw a starboard bias line and the fleet battling hard to win this end. With a fierce looking black cloud on the right-hand side of the beat, a lot of the fleet opted to tack out immediately after the start and head towards this potential gain feature. Little did we know it wouldn't come into effect on the first beat – those who played the left came in ahead. Again, it was very close at the windward mark with Ben Flower first around followed by Mullan. Towards the bottom of the run, we started to see this rain cloud make its mark, swinging the breeze round to the right slightly. Lots of the fleet rounded the gate and held on starboard, but the shift kept going right throughout the beat and Dan Jones capitalised, rounding the final windward ahead of Mullan. On the downwind, Mullan caught Jones to take his first win of the series.

With a little wait after this race to let the breeze settle down and return to its normal direction, the race got underway with a pin-end bias line. Gill-Taylor nailed the pin end and led the fleet into a tack. A long hold on port saw Smith and Farren-Price punch out from the pack and when the next righty came in they were looking good. Around the top mark, it was Calder who made good use of a lefty at the top followed by Gill-Taylor and Farren-Price. Unfortunately, these top three boats were unaware of the course change – Standards were set to do the inner loop. By the time they realized this, the rest of the fleet was already half way down the run. From here, Mullan had a close battle with Smith for the bullet and just edged ahead to take the win.

For our final race of day four, we had a little more breeze come through and a much more consistent direction, with only a few small shifts up the first beat. With a slightly pin-end bias line, Gill-Taylor came off his favourite position, smashing the pin and leading a pack out to the left. Smith, followed by Mullan, headed out to the right. At the top mark, the leaders of both sides came back together virtually inseparable and Smith led round the top, followed by Calder and Mullan. On the downwind, Farren-Price found some pace and rounded the bottom mark level with Smith but split at the gate. Smith came back across on a lift ahead of Farren-Price, with Calder close behind. Gill-Taylor played the left-hand side of the second beat well and came right back into the game, close behind Calder and Farren-Price. Smith protected his lead and went on to win the race followed by Farren-Price and Calder.

For the final day of racing, a strong easterly breeze greeted us with gusts in the high 20s and, as you can imagine, quite shifty coming off the snowy hills. The first race got away with a slight pin-end bias line with most of the fleet towards this end. It was much of a drag race from here with the guys who could hold their lane almost going to the port layline. It was the leader of the class, Joe Mullan, showing his upwind speed in the breeze, who got around the first mark leading, followed by second

and third in the series respectively, Calder and Farren-Price. Onto the run and Farren-Price linked a couple of nice gusts to overtake the two and round the gate leading. Up the second beat, Farren-Price managed to just keep ahead of Calder going onto the final run. In this intense battle between the two, Farren-Price lost focus and spun into a capsize, allowing Calder to take the lead with Giles in second and Mullan third.

For the final race of the Championship, we had a starboard bias line with a lot of the fleet electing to start as close to the Committee Boat as possible. A few shifts up the first beat saw a more even split, however, the leaders still came from the left-hand side with Mullan rounding first, followed by Calder and Farren-Price. Not many place changes happened on the run, but the fleet was still in quite close proximity behind the top three. Going up the second beat, Mullan pulled away and covered the fleet to protect his series lead. Calder and Farren-Price had a good battle which was won by Farren-Price as the course was shortened at the top of the second beat.

Joe Mullan deservedly took the Standard Youth National Champion title, with Jamie Calder in second and Jake Farren-Price in third.



The Standard fleet was won by Joe Mullan. Photo: Marc Turner/RYA

Overall results: www.rya.org.uk/racing-events/2018-youth-nationals/Pages/results.aspx