

Northern Ireland Squib Championships
RNIYC
30th / 31st May 2009

Event report by 9e

Summer finally arrived on Belfast Lough just in time for the Squib Northern Championships, sponsored by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and hosted by the Royal North of Ireland Yacht Club.

PRO Neale McCullough certainly dialled the right extension number when he ordered the weather as we were treated to champagne sailing conditions throughout the weekend with 12 to 20 knots of breeze and bright sunshine for the nineteen boats who took the starting gun with visitors from Royal St. George, Quoile and Howth Yacht Clubs joining the 12 local boats.

Just before the start of the first race the wind dropped from 12 to about 7 knots making it difficult to get away but defending champion, John Driscoll, sailing Afficianado with Dave Cagney, was fast out of the blocks and led for the first lap of the windward / leeward course. On the second beat, they chose the right hand side while Femme Fatale [Vincent Delaney and Noel Colclough] found fresher breeze and a nice left shift on the left side to take control. Afficianado lost more places on the run, dropping to 11th at the leeward mark before sneaking back 6 places on the short beat to the line, finishing in 5th place behind Toy for the Boys [Peter Wallace and Sian McCleave] in 4th, Julian Sandford and Hammy Baker, 3rd, Nimrod [Warren Farron and Graham Dickson, 2nd with Femme Fatale claiming victory.

Race two saw more wind with gusts up to twenty knots. This time , Afficianado made no mistakes, leading from start to finish despite a similar attack from the left, this time led by Inshalla [David Eccles and Phil Hutchinson] who finished second ahead of Emmet Dalton and Emer Harte in Klipbok with Toys claiming another fourth.

Race 3 saw a course change with the mean wind shifting 15 degrees to the left. John and 'Cags' strengthened their position with another flag to flag win but the competition was hot behind them with some great private battles going on right through the fleet. A new face appeared on the podium in the shape of Frank Whelan and Brian O'Hara [Deadly Buzz] just pipping Klipbok and Femme Fatale with Jonny Millar and Sally Watson [High Flyer] justifying their new sails with 5th place. With three great races in the bag, everyone went ashore, tired but happy to enjoy a few refreshing drinks on the lawn in front of the club house. The early finish meant a relaxing afternoon and a good turn for Gary and his team in the bar before a quick freshen up and back for the evening buffet and dancing.

There must have been a few aggressive pills popped into the breakfast tea on Sunday morning as loads of boats pushed the line in race 4 resulting in a general recall. Neale took no prisoners and came straight out with the black flag which put everyone back in their box and the race got away in a lovely 15 knot easterly breeze. Afficianado sealed the championship with another bullet followed by the very consistent Toy for

the Boys in 2nd, Fantome [Ronan McDowell and Gordon Hudson] 3rd and Mike and Gavin Vaughan in Joint Venture 4th.

The final race was an interesting affair as most of the fleet rock hopped up the shore trying to avoid the building flood tide. This resulted in lots of tacking, dipping and general verbal kicking, gouging and shouting which could be heard from the committee boat half a mile away. However as far as this reporter knows, no damage was inflicted and the only consequence was more fantastic racing with issues being resolved right through the fleet.

Toys finished the event with a deserving win followed by Femme Fatale, Afficianado and Allegro [Andrew and Jonathon McCluggage] who capped a consistent performance with 4th place.

The closeness of the racing was reflected in the overall scoring with three boats tying for 6th, 7th and 8th places. This was resolved in favour of Inishalla with Allegro taking 5th, Klipbok 4th, Femme Fatale 3rd and Peter and Sian in Toys 2nd. But there was no disputing the winner with John and Dave sailing very steadily to take the championship for the umpteenth time [well third actually] well done to them.

Surprise of the weekend belonged to Jack Anderson who had to scour the countryside in the run up to the event for a crew after brother Thomas cried off with a sore leg. Imagine his reaction, then, when he sailed past the committee boat at the start of race three, and looked up to see Thomas at the top of the mast taking pictures!

Another early finish and back ashore to enjoy the Jazz event on the grass outside the club while waiting for the tide to come in to recover the visiting boats.

All in all it was a successful event, in part due to the fabulous weather but made possible by all the helpers both on the water and ashore. Many thanks to all involved.

Everyone agreed, it doesn't get much better than this!