

Racing Secretary 2024 report

The racing season in the SW kicked off in earnest with the Royal Western YC Plymouth-Falmouth-Fowey triangle race, there only having been two entries for the Saltash Spring series as the poor weather over the winter had delayed many re-launches as jobs were yet to be completed. The triangle saw a good entry of 16 boats (the MOCRA fleet being the largest in the race), with a couple of boats from the Solent who had overwintered at the Multihull centre also taking part. Unusually, it was almost entirely a downwind event with only a couple of miles hard on the wind between the day 2 start in Falmouth and the first turning mark off the Helford. There were several boats on the podium over the event including the 2 big tris Morpheus and Uno, the usual suspects of Hissy Fit and Suenos and finally Foxy and Molly 5. It was Molly 5, Steve Holmwood's much modified Maldives, straight from the yard which prevailed overall and was a very popular winner as she had stood by another boat that hit Black Rock at the start of the Falmouth leg. Dazcats filled the rest of the podium with Hissy Fit sailed by Simon Baker was 2nd and Suenos sailed by Rupert Kidd 3rd.

Next in the South West was the RNSA race from Plymouth to St Peter Port over the late May bank holiday weekend, this is becoming a regular fixture in the SW multi-calendar and was used this year by some as part of the qualifying mileage for the Round Ireland Race. The race started with quite brisk conditions, but the wind died as the competitors approached the Islands with the choice to make as to go North or South about. Foxy a Dazcat 1295 sailed by Andrew Baily was the only boat to choose North about and down the Little Russel, a decision which was to pay handsomely as she was the only finisher. The rest of the fleet Easytiger, Bare Necessities, Nemo and Hissy Fit timing out about a mile short of the finish after light conditions South of the island turned into no wind and a foul tide for the last stretch up to the line.

The South West season continued through the summer with the usual selection of short coastal races to Fowey, Salcombe and races round various buoys in Whitsand Bay run by various clubs and the regular Mosquito Tuesday night series which attracted 8 entries and was won by The Farrier F82R Panoramix, sailed by Brendan Seward. There was a smaller turnout than usual in the coastal races, with some boats being away cruising or having other commitments. Doug Reid's much modified Norman Cross regularly featured on the podium in these races, including winning the Wreck race. The podiums were mostly completed by the usual suspects of Panoramix and Mat Theobald and Enora Pinchon's Nemo a Newick 36; the latter winning the Stewards Cup and Plym YC series of inshore races.

The MOCRA Nationals were again jointly hosted by the Royal Victoria YC and Bembridge SC in the week prior to the Round the Island race, June 11 to 13. Unfortunately, the event was too close to the Round Ireland Race for 4 of the West Country boats, who also soaked up some of the crew from other potential West Country entries, so numbers were a bit down compared to 2023, but still a decent turn out at 10 boats. The racing took place over 3 days under very varied conditions, the first two days being very light and the 3rd day more boisterous, a precursor to the strong conditions of the RTI. The first day had 2 of the 3 scheduled round the cans races off Fishbourne, the wind dying at the end of the 2nd race precluding the third. The second day was modified to suit the light conditions, the start was moved out past No-Mans Land Fort to enable the race to get the fleet to Bembridge, in a reasonable time. Once in Bembridge, two further races were completed. The 3rd day saw 3 races complete in more boisterous conditions, with a Southerly F4. Sadly, for FC24 Storm, after 2 frustrating days of light airs and the opportunity at last to show how fast she could go on her foils, she was dismantled on the first leg (apparently the ring holding the shrouds had failed). Fortunately, no one was injured and once the rig was recovered and two of her crew had been dropped on BSC's supporting launch, she headed back to Chichester under her own power. The podium was dominated by the smaller trimarans, apart from Molly 5 who appeared for races 2,3 and

8. Uno the Grainger 36 in her first season with James Holder was consistently at or near the front on the water but struggled to make up the time she needed to for her rating on the fairly short courses. In the end Nick Wood and his team on Origami a Farrier F27 put together a remarkable series with 8 straight wins. The next two boats were both on 15 points, on a very close count back Alini a Farrier F9A helmed by Mark Upton-Brown was second and Nigel Talbot in Sanity an F82R was third. A notable achievement was that of the father and daughter combo of Andrew and Milly Smith (who helmed throughout) in Dragon Boy a Dragonfly 800 who were 6th overall.

The building conditions experienced at the Nationals carried on throughout Friday and into the Saturday of the Round the Island Race. The forecast was such that the bridge deck-class and the under 9.15m MOCRA class were cancelled along with many of the mono-hull classes; with only the over 9.15m MOCRA class and the Grand Prix class taking part entries were understandably low. There were only 154 finishers in all classes, demonstrating just how tough conditions were, with over 50Kts reported at the Needles. Highland Fling a Gunboat 80 sailed by Irvine Laidlaw made it round to take line honours in a very speedy 3hrs 39mins, despite having done some of it under main alone. Harley a Dragonfly 40 sailed by Mark Atkinson won the MOCRA class, being the only finisher and took 3rd multi-hull overall behind Highland Fling and Oceans an ORMA 60 tri Sailed by Francis Joyon. The SSE Renewables Round Ireland Race started from Wicklow on 22nd June with 5 multihull entries, Paradox a 60ft Tri and 4 Dazcats, Easytiger a D995, Bare Necessities a D1150, Foxy a D1295 and Hissy Fit a D1495. The weather for the race was very varied; after a boisterous F4 upwind start and beat to Tuscar Rock there were several long light-wind spells with some poor visibility punctuated by some fresher breezes, but the wind was only briefly abaft the beam for most of the competitors. The light patches saw some concertina effects in the fleet, with leads that were built up being reduced in the light spells, which often seemed to coincide with tidal gates. The final big tidal gate was entering the North Channel past Rathlin Island where tides regularly reach 4 knots or more, Bare Necessities went close inshore and managed to find a back eddy so they didn't suffer too much from the adverse tide, Foxy and Easytiger who came round a bit later benefitted from a good push from the tide but all the catamarans then had to face a long beat down the Irish Sea to the finish with winds reaching 30Kts plus at times. Frustrating, as the forecast had predicted the wind coming round to the West, so an exhilarating reach had originally been in prospect, but the wind stayed resolutely from the SW making for a tiring and wet beat. Paradox was ahead of the deteriorating weather and took line honours with an elapsed time of 3 days 2 hours. The Dazcats finished in fairly close proximity with Hissy Fit taking 5 days 2 hrs, to take 2nd on corrected time and Bare Necessities taking the under 50ft class with an elapsed time of 5 days 9 hrs with Easytiger 3rd taking 5 days 13 hours. There was less than 5 hours in it for the first 3 places in the under 50ft class after 5 days of racing. The hospitality of the Wicklow Sailing Club that runs the event (together with the RORC) has to be experienced to be believed.

The RORC season points series saw the larger professionally crewed boats such as the MOD 70s dominating the grand-prix events including the Middle Sea race, the trans-Atlantic and Caribbean 600. In the South Coast UK races Minor Swing a Dazcat 1295 sailed by Didier Bouillard was the only entry in the Cervantes Trophy, The Myth of Malham and The JOG Cherbourg race and Black Cap sailed by Thierry Roger a Newick Echo 39 tri was the only entry in the Cowes Dinard race. However, Minor Swing's persistence and consistently good results including a 2nd in the Dhream Cup against a wide variety of competitors from a 33ft tri Acapella to MOD 70's racing under the French Multi 2000 rule paid off and she ran out to be the RORC overall points Champion.

Race participation in the Solent is on the rise. The Royal Victoria ran several weekend regattas during the season and an open series of races, approximately once a month throughout the season, and had good turn outs with 10 boats taking part in the open series and between 5 and 7 in each of the regattas. Strider a Dragonfly 32 Evo sailed by Richard Rae, made a good start to the year winning the

season opening Commissioning Cup; she carried on with her winning ways taking the open series ahead of Nice Tri a Dragonfly 28 sport sailed by James O'Callaghan, and Milly Mo a Dragonfly 920 sailed by Tim Haslam. Sanity an F28 sailed by Nigel Talbot won the Merrydown regatta ahead of Strider and Milly Mo. Sanity also won the Bank Holiday Regatta with Milly Mo 2nd and Strider 3rd. The RVC autumn series attracted 4 boats with Richard Rae's Strider winning.

The East Coast participation was a bit down with only 3 entries in Burnham week and 2 in the Royal Burnham Whitsun regatta, with Origami the F27 sailed by Nick Wood coming out on top in both. Wandering Glider a Dragonfly 920 Extreme sailed by Andrew Scurr was 2nd in the Whitsun and 3rd in Burnham week, Triassic another F27 sailed by Nigel Stevens was second in Burnham week. In Scotland, the Scottish Island Peaks race was the main event of the season, though not sailed using

MOCRA ratings; 4 multihulls took part, with 2 retirements Excalibur III sailed by Angus Jones won from Opportune sailed by Ewan Thorburn.

The increased participation in the Solent and the slight reduction in participation in the SW race series, combined with the SW boats preparing for the Round Ireland Race and thus missing the Nationals resulted in Solent-based trimarans dominating the very closely fought MOCRA season points competition. Tim Haslam in Milly Mo winning from Nigel Talbot in Sanity and Mat Theobald and Enora Pinchon's SW based Nemo taking 3rd.

Overall MOCRA racing seems to be in good health, especially in the Solent where after a few quiet years participation is on the rise. The fine-tuning of the rating for this season with headsails set flying now attracting a rating penalty and actual foresail area rather than foretriangle area being rated has been a qualified success, but exactly how headsails set flying are measured is to be adjusted, so fuller sails which are less effective upwind are penalised less. There are still some anomalies in the MOCRA rule especially in how bigger heavier boats are rated that are difficult if not impossible to address in a "simple" spread-sheet-based rule; consequently, we are investigating whether the Ocean Racing Congress (ORC) rule which is based on velocity prediction can help resolve the anomalies.