

Sprint 15 Open TT at Draycote Water Sailing Club

12th January 2007

By Matt Isherwood and Pete Slater

Draycote Water Sailing Club played host to the Sprint 15 TT on a somewhat 'fresh' Saturday in mid January. This was the first of the Sprint 15 events of the 2007 season and proved to be a nail-biting, rollercoaster ride of an event for the competitors and race officers alike.

Saturday dawned a little overcast, with light South Westerly winds. The forecast however was for the wind strength to increase throughout the day, for once the weather men got their forecast spot on! This proved to be the biggest challenge for the 18 intrepid racers who braved the increasingly fresh conditions.

Race one with the wind howling down the pond saw the Race Officers set a square course leaving all marks to port. The Race Officer was able to use the entire water providing the Sprint 15 fleet with a long beat, a screaming reach, a testing downwind leg and a second screamer of a reach back to complete the lap. Even before the start there were numerous cartwheels, pitch poles and capsizes as the fleet got to grips with the conditions. Unfortunately for some, these experiences left them somewhat dazed and they decided not to risk sailing in the ensuing maelstrom. In the first race Charles Watson from Halifax SC led the way from start to finish but there was a touse for second place with Bob Carter from Grafham swapping places with Steve Sawford from S.S. Marine. At this point the Draycote sailors were well represented towards the back of the fleet (To put it politely!) and one of the Draycote boys was heard to say, "I was just making sure everyone got round safely, its easier to do this from the back!"





Over lunch in the clubs 'very' wet-bar, those who survived recounted tales of near-cartwheels and questioned the size of the waves on an inland reservoir. Having been given a telling lesson in heavy weather sailing, the Draycote fleet set about picking up tips from the race leaders. The key pointer was, "Up-side down isn't quick so try to limit the number of times you do it!!"

Race two saw the sane stay on the shore to lick their wounds. 10 boats lined up to do battle with one another and Mother Nature. Again the fleet got away first time and it was close fought up the first beat, and any one of 5 boats were in contention at the first mark. There was generally little traffic on the racecourse, other than the leeward gybe mark, which just happened to be the 'jump to light speed' point for the windsurfers as they accelerated up to 30+knts or simply crashed making the gybe particularly interesting! These first 5 boats made the best of the conditions extending their lead throughout the race from the chasing pack.

Convincing overall Winner was Charles Watson but through sheer strength and persistence Matt Isherwood and Jan Elfring from Draycote turned in a respectable 6th and 7th place and restored the pride of the home fleet.

Photos by Derek James from DWSC



Many thanks to all the Draycote people for the pre-race information and race day organisation. In addition many thanks should also go to the rescue staff who were certainly kept busy during the day!