

South East youngsters defy weather to clinch chance of winning £30,000 powerboats

Despite severe weather battering the country, 18 youngsters from South East sailing clubs battled it out in regional final of the RYA Honda Youth RIB Challenge held on July 21st at Piddinghoe, near Newhaven in East Sussex, organized by Ian Lambert of Newhaven & Seaford Sailing Club.

Children compete in two age groups: 8-12 and 13-16. These youngsters (both boys and girls) drive a 50hp motor boat around a demanding course, involving a high speed slalom, 'Man Overboard' drill and reversing round a buoy. The fastest helm in each age group can win for their club one of two 4.8m Ribcraft RIBs with a Honda 50hp engine on an Indespension trailer – each worth over £15,000.

Winners in this regional heat now go forward into the National finals, held at the Southampton Boat Show on September 15th. There they will compete with other regional winners from England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

South East region winner in the 8-12 age group was Adam Bermingham from Wilsonian Sailing Club (Rochester). Adam also won last year, and must now be a top contender to win one of these powerful powerboats for his club. Second (by just two seconds!) was Sebastian Hansell from Downs Sailing Club (Deal), with Dann Fenn from Newhaven & Seaford Sailing Club taking third place. Special mention to Lewis Humphries from Pevensy Bay Sailing Club, who – not yet 8 years old – was not only the youngest at this regional competition but also the youngest of all those who have competed throughout the UK. Racing a 50hp powerboat in such severe weather was some feat for one so young!

In the 13-16 age group, it was Martyn Wogan from Crawley Mariners who earned his slot at Southampton. Ben Hedges from Newhaven & Seaford came second, and Ashley King from Bewl Valley Sailing Club near Tunbridge Wells was third.

Keith Ellison, who organizes the annual competition on behalf of the RYA, commented that "This event has been a huge success. Boat handling standards are rising year by year, particularly in the 8-12 year age group"

The Championship is sponsored by Honda, Ribcraft, ICOM and Indespension Trailers.

Tony Rix
RYA-SE PRO