

Topper South East Traveller Open at Newhaven and Seaford Sailing Club

3rd July 2010-07-04

22 experienced helms from 9 clubs in the South East enjoyed brilliant conditions which saw some competitive and close combat.

Launching and recovering on the South East coast is always the biggest challenge, and the strength and friendliness of the Topper Traveller 'roadies' came through once again with loads of help in the surf for any inland helm who was unsure of adopting the recommended solution - sailing the boat straight onto the shingle, having raised the nose by moving to the after deck. Not a technique taught by the RYA, but tried and tested as the best solution when the surf is up !

WindGuru forecast was spot on with the wind shifting from NW to SW by the time of the first race, which delivered a flat sea and easy launching. The race officer was able to get three races in before lunch whilst the tide was slack and the wind gradually rose from 10 to 16 knots.

In the first race Darren Field an adult laser sailor from the home club NSSC, taking advantage of his son's absence to sail the Topper won the first race, closely followed by the previous year's winner Felix Crowther from Queen Mary S.C. It was clear that Jonty Freeman NSSC (4th) and Clive Jackson, Papercourt (3rd) early leaders had disadvantaged themselves by holding something of a private duel.

Races two and three saw Jonty and Felix holding off the pack to take two firsts and two seconds respectively, with Louise Knevett - NSSC, Niall Houston- a 'southern area' sailor from Hayling Island SC trying his luck in the neighbouring region, Alex Geal- Pevensey Bay SC and Dan Archer Bewl Valley SC all pushing the leaders hard around the course.

It was a tired but satisfied fleet that went back to a beach where the South Westerly wind had started building a mild surf.

Following a good lunch and an hours relax in the brilliant sunshine a portion of the fleet took one look at the surf and decided to watch the event from the beach, but 15 boats (one with a parent beach crew who fancied his luck) took up the challenge, and with lots of support launched through the surf into a large swell and winds that were giving a consistent 14 to 16 knots – fantastic conditions for this experienced fleet to show what a Topper is built for.

On the committee boat it was clear that competitors were stretching themselves and that fitness and stamina would play a large part in the final race. Whilst most helms had a grim and determined look as they rocketed past within touching distance of the stern, one sailor stood out not only in demonstrating perfect control of the boat, but also in demonstrating that Topper Sailors enjoy their sailing, giving the committee boat a brilliant smile every time she passed. It seemed likely that at some point Katie Wood of Weirwood S.C. had benefitted from Dave Cockerill - RYA Topper National Coach's technique of using a water pistol on anyone who doesn't smile when they are in range. !

The final winner, Jonty Freeman, who had recently started competing a Laser and returned to the Topper for his home club event, demonstrated that he not only retained the Topper technique but also the stamina and led the fleet around the course, extending his lead to almost a minute by the final gun

Prizes: With 1 discard from the 4 race series:

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| 1 st | Jonty Freeman, Newhaven and Seaford Sailing Club | 3 points |
| 2 nd | Felix Crowther, Queen Mary Sailing Club, | 6 points |
| 3 rd | Louis Knevett, Newhaven and Seaford Sailing Club, | 10 points |

Race Officer Prize – happiest sailor Katie Wood, Weirwood SC

Race Officers Prize – most helpful sailor on the beach – Darren Field, NSSC

Beating across from Seaford Head, photo courtesy Howard Minto

