

## Police Offshore Sailing Championships 2009.

This year's event was hosted by Sussex Police and held on the Solent between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009.

24 teams took part from Forces throughout the UK including PSNI using matched Sunsail Sunfast 37 yachts with up to a maximum crew of 8 providing an even platform to compete from.

Nottinghamshire Police entered 2 teams for the event.

The teams arrived at Port Solent at 1700hrs Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May to arrange collection of the Yachts to check them out and complete a formal handover from Sunsail staff.

Notts Team A were allocated Sunsail 11 with Team B on Sunsail 29. Notts Team A being the defending champions had the most experience on board the boat with Team B being skippered by Nick Shaw with more of a scratch team looking to gain experience and sail safe.

The boat equipment was checked out and Louise Davensac was hoisted up the mast in a stiff breeze and swell to ensure all the sheaves (pulleys) were running freely and to lubricate the tracks with WD40.

The skippers briefing was held at 0800 **Monday 18<sup>th</sup>** at Sunsail offices with the skippers being told that the start would be about 1130 at a buoy called Universal Marina near to Cowes about 5 miles outside of Portsmouth Harbour.

As Notts Team A had 4 of the crew who had competed together last year and four new members two of whom had not competed or raced big boats before. The decision was made to sail out early at 0900 to gain some practice en-route to the start. In view of the conditions with winds of force 5 gusting to force 7 the skipper decided on one reef in the main sail to reduce its area. The early start allowed some tacking and gibing practice and a chance to launch the spinnaker and confirm the winds were too strong to fly it that day.

Race 1.

The first race did not get underway until well after noon due to the conditions and the fact a crewmember from the GMP team who had come into heavy contact with the boom on the yacht needing airlifting by helicopter to hospital for treatment

The first race got under way with Notts A reaching the first buoy in about 8<sup>th</sup> place, however, the decision to only have one reef in the main sail paid dividends on the downwind leg as most other teams had elected for two reefs and so they overtook several other teams to reach the 2<sup>nd</sup> buoy in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. The final leg into the wind saw numerous changes of place however Notts A managed to get over the line in 3<sup>rd</sup> place with Met Team D winning the race.

After a delay and with conditions getting worse the race officer abandoned racing for the day, several teams had damage to their boats and injuries to crew. The teams spent the night in Cowes Yacht Haven.

## **Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup>**

### Race 2.

Start at 0900, it was still quite breezy (force 5) but was forecast to decrease. The Race officer wanted to get 4 races in to get the racing schedule back on line, as two races had been lost the previous day. So it promised to be a long and testing day of racing.

Racing was round a course marked by buoys with Notts Team A managing to come from a mid fleet position to finish 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 2<sup>nd</sup> race of the event, it appeared they had the speed as other teams were left behind and the leaders were caught up but a better effort was needed with the first beat into the wind. Met. D team won the 2<sup>nd</sup> race.

### Race 3.

Round the buoys with conditions again starting to get windier Notts A improved with a 2<sup>nd</sup> place after a better first beat.

### Race 4.

Same again however the speed was improving with another 2<sup>nd</sup> place by less than a boat length to Cleveland A, Met D coming 12<sup>th</sup> after a halyard had snapped.

### Race 5.

The wind had again increased from a steady force 5 to gusts of up to 30knots (force7) so much for the forecast it would drop.

A good start and first beat had Notts A 2<sup>nd</sup> into the first buoy with Met. D just ahead, a short downwind leg saw them overtake into the 2<sup>nd</sup> buoy for a 2 ½ mile reach to buoy 3, Notts A reached this with a boat length between them and Met D for the final beat into the wind. The lead increased on the final beat giving Notts A the 1<sup>st</sup> win of the nine race series. Met D coming 2<sup>nd</sup>. It was now apparent that Met D and Notts A were the form teams to beat.

## **Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup>**

### Race 6

The Race officer wanted to get a Round the Island passage race (60miles) into the event, so the day started at 0800 just outside Cowes.

The wind had decreased to a force 1-2 with the tide taking the fleet out of the Solent via the Needles. A great start by Notts A and a small tussle with 2 other teams just

after the start saw Notts A move into the lead and round the first buoy with a 4 minute lead.

The crew were surprised when told that the headland they could see in the distance (St. Catherine's Head) was 3 hrs away, however, by hoisting the spinnaker this was reduced this to 2-½ hrs and increased our lead to about a mile.

At St Catherine's Head the wind died and the tide started to change allowing the opposition to catch up. As the tide changed the wind improved with the lead again stretching out. The wind kept varying in strength and direction and Notts A were nearly undone by having to avoid the cruise ship the 'Queen Victoria' having to go into an area with no wind.

After 11 hrs Notts A crossed the finish line in first place with Met D coming in 3<sup>rd</sup> after a fortunate wind shift brought them through the same area where Notts A had found no wind.

At the end of the third day, Notts A and Met. D were equal on points but on count back Notts A were in first place with 3 races to go.

#### **Thursday. 21<sup>st</sup>**

Two races were planned for Thursday around buoys in the Solent.

##### **Race 7**

A great start and first beat found Notts A and Met D first and second into the first buoy, some slick spinnaker work at the 2<sup>nd</sup> buoy saw Notts A increase the lead and win the first race of the day with a 3 minute margin.

A discussion then took place on the boat, should Notts A race tactically like Ben Ainsley in the Olympics and take the Met D team out at the start of the next race. If the Met D Team could be covered and pushed down the field the better overall results of Notts A would mean they would win.

The team decided to race for the win in the last race of the day to retain the title.

##### **Race 8**

Another good start saw Notts A into the first buoy first with Met D 2<sup>nd</sup>, for a long run to the 2<sup>nd</sup> buoy, Notts A were taken the wrong way by the skipper which allowed Met D to lead at the 2<sup>nd</sup> buoy by 5 boat lengths.

A 2 mile beat into the wind to the finish saw Notts A catch up Met D with both boats having a minor tacking duel half way up the beat before both boats split taking slightly different routes to the finish line.

With 50 metres to go the Met D just crossed in front of Notts A starting another tacking battle. Notts A just managing to cross Met D with 2 tacks to go, crossing the

line with 2 boat lengths to spare. The championship had been decided in the last 50 metres in the penultimate race. A shout of well sailed from the helm on Met D (Graham Cook) confirmed that Met D had been doing their maths as well!

The official social event of the Championships was held at the Folly Inn later Thursday evening with the crews having a formal dinner and speeches from the Sailing Section Chair and a chance to meet the Sponsors of the Round the Island Race G4 Solutions.

### **Friday. 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Having secured first place Notts A did not need to sail the final race of the event but decided to go out in style racing as it was Sunny with a Force 4 wind making the conditions ideal.

#### Race 9

A relatively poor start saw the same two teams at the first buoy, Met D followed by Notts A with a pack chasing hard, a reach with Spinnaker saw Notts A close up on Met D overtaking on the downwind leg to the 3<sup>rd</sup> buoy, the lead was maintained and increased to about 3 minutes by the end of the race.

The win certainly confirmed the overall result, Notts A having 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> places 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> places and 5, 1<sup>st</sup> places in the 9 race series. With two discard allowed, counting the 5 first places and 2, 2nds this gave 9 points to count.

This is the 6<sup>th</sup> Year in succession that Nottinghamshire has won this event taking it to 8 occasions in total since Nottinghamshire started taking part. It is a credit to the core crew and helm that they have been able to accommodate and develop new inexperienced crewmembers each year and maintain their success.

The Prize giving was held at Port Solent Sunsail Offices in the presence of the main event sponsors Police Credit Union after which the teams left arriving home during the early hours of Saturday morning.

#### The Team. Notts A

Pete Walters, Skipper/ Helm  
Doug Ing, Mainsheet trimmer  
Rick Priestley, Winches  
John Austin, Winches  
Andy Muir, Navigator (*ex Met officer, was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> place Met boat last year*)  
Louise Davensac, Spinnaker/ Bow  
Steve Payne, Bow  
Paul Pilsworth, Bow lead.