

## **PSUK OFFSHORE 09**

I was lucky enough to get picked as the novice to join the Police sailing team this year and be part of the PSUK Offshore Championships. I joined the team in boat A at this event on 17<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> May from Port Solent.

I have some experience in sailing a dinghy at a local sailing club, but I have only ever been on a 1 day trip helping to crew a boat on the sea. I was excited but a bit nervous about joining the Police sailing team on this event, as I know they have a great reputation and I didn't want to let them down.

We all arrived at Port Solent on the Sunday evening and my first task was to be hoisted up the mast of our boat in order to lubricate the tracks with WD40. I loved this bit. It was very windy and I initially thought the team were winding me up when I was encouraged to do it, but no, there I was hanging on for dear life spraying WD40 on to a mast in very strong winds!

The first day was brilliant, the team said it was a bit of a 'baptism of fire' for me as the winds were 25-30kmh and I have to say it was a bit of a shock to the system. I loved it though, especially when we were on a beat and the team sat on the side of the boat hanging through the rails to act as ballast. The boat was crashing in to the waves and the sea came pouring over us – now that's what I call sailing. This was the point when I knew I was in for a great experience. The whole team worked so hard during the race and I got swept up in the whole competitive atmosphere.

As the week went on we improved and starting winning the races, which really made all the bruises I was getting worth while. The skipper – Pete Walters, found time to give me the opportunity to muck in more by letting me helm (on the quiet times), and Paul Pilsworth showed me the ropes on the bow, which was great as it made me feel I was contributing a bit more, as I wanted to be part of the team. It was a completely new experience for me, and I wanted to help wherever I could. I have to say, the whole team were fantastic at including me in the experience and gave me encouragement and advice throughout the week.

The Thursday was great too, our final race of the day being a really close race to the finish line with the Met Police. This was really exciting, and I just couldn't tell which one of us was going to win it, the lead kept changing. Both boats were playing tactically and it all came down to the very last tack, which Pete worked out just right, and we made it through the finish line just seconds before them. The whole team cheered and we went straight to the pub to celebrate.....another highlight of the week – the pub every night.

I have tried to work out which was my favourite part of the week, but I really can't be specific. I loved each day for different reasons. I enjoyed the round the island race, which we won, but I loved the action of the first day too. I liked watching boat B too, and was rooting for them all the time. I absolutely loved the start line of the races, I found it so exciting and could feel my heart pumping as the final seconds ticked away until the

sound of the horn to start. Thanks to Pete's tactics and timing, we had a good start every time and I felt dead proud as we crossed the line and watched all the boats chase us!

On the final day when we received our awards, I was quite overwhelmed. What a great finish to a great week.

I was exhausted by the last day, from charging around the boat, and the lack of sleep due to a multitude of snoring (not by me)! However, I would do it again and again if I get the opportunity.

I've been home for 4 days now and my flat only stopped swaying yesterday. I have been waking up in the night finding myself shouting 'TACKING' and clinging on to the edge of the bed. I couldn't even walk in a straight line for 2 days – nothing new there though!

Thanks to everyone on the sailing team, both boats A and B, for making me feel so welcome as the novice, I had a FANTASTIC time.

Louise Davensac