

Burghfield Comet Open 2016

Twelve Comets arrived at Burghfield's Comet Open on 23rd April 2016 to find a rather cold day, but with a good strength breeze. The event was shared with the Streaker and Solo fleets. Race officer Ian Bullock set four short races, and as the wind was across the lake each lap consisted of two shorter beats with reaches and runs between.

The Solo start immediately before the Comet start had an individual recall. This encouraged the Comets to start cautiously. The pin end was the best end to start and Chris Robinson started here, but he crossed to the right hand side of the course to get to mark one first. He was followed by Chris Hatton and Michael Ettershank. The rest of the fleet who were closely bunched behind them. Chris H passed Chris R on the first run and Chris R was then caught by Michael on the second beat. However, on the final beat Michael chose not to cover Chris R and when they came together Michael was unable to cross ahead and had to tack letting Chris R past. Hence the first three were Chris H, Chris R and Michael. Further back Peter Mountford pulled away from the pack of boats to take fourth place.

In race two the Committee Boat end was the favoured start and the starters from this end, Michael, Chris H, Chris R and Henry Jagers were first around the windward mark in that order. Chris H overtook Michael on the run and as the four spread out it seemed unlikely there would be any further changes at the top. However, a squall came through at the start of the final lap and this changed the order throughout the fleet. Michael passed Chris H to take the lead while Henry was caught by Peter and John Coppenhall. On the last beat Henry, Peter and John were all very close and Henry was able to get past Peter and John to take back fourth place.

In race three the Committee boat end was favoured again. John Coppenhall pushed Chris H past the end of the line, but was too early and had to bear off. This allowed Michael to execute a perfect Committee boat end start, with the Race Officer confirming that he was dead on the line as the gun went. Not surprisingly Michael was first to the windward mark followed by Chris R. John and Annette Walter were not far behind. Chris H recovered from his poor start and came up into third place. At the end of the first beat of lap two the three leaders, Michael, Chris R and Chris H closed up and tacked onto the layline, one behind the other. However, they were headed and found they were unable to lay the mark. Chris H elected to put in an extra tack while Michael and Chris R hung on hoping for a lift. This duly arrived, but it came too late for Michael who clipped the mark as he rounded it. His 360 dropped him back into third. This gave Chris R the win followed by Chris H and Michael, with Peter further back in fourth place.

After three races Chris R, Chris H and Michael had taken all the top three spots in the three races. With one race win each whoever won the last race out of these three would win overall. Further back Peter was two points clear of John, but needed a better result than John to ensure that it stayed that way.

In race four Michael and Chris H elected for a Committee boat start while Chris R went for the pin end. This turned out to be the favoured end, and Chris R was the first to mark one followed by John who had also started at the pin. They were followed by Michael and Chris H. At the start of the second beat John and Chris H went right, while Chris R and Michael went left. The right hand side was paying off, so Chris R switched to the right, dropping behind Chris H as he did so, and only just ahead of John and Peter who had moved up into fifth. However, Michael carried on up the left hand side of the course, and eventually this paid off and he rounded the windward mark just behind Chris H who was leading. He subsequently passed Chris H to win the final race and overall. Chris H was second, which gave him second place overall too. Further back a sudden gust capsized a few boats as

they came down the run. Although he stayed upright, Chris R lost control and this allowed Peter to get through into third. This ensured Peter would take fourth place overall.

The first three places were taken by the three oldest boats in the fleet which shows that Comets remain competitive despite their age.

Chris Robinson