

Comets Return to Burghfield

After a two-year absence due to Covid (or three years for those not prepared to race during storm Hannah in 2019) the Comets returned to Burghfield Sailing Club for the first Comet Open of the year on Saturday 2nd April.

The twelve competitors arrived to find a cold day with a light westerly wind coming straight down the lake. This allowed the race officer, Peter Blackman, to set a figure-of-eight course with a long beat and three reaches or runs.

In the first race the line was biased and the pin end was very congested. Eddie Pope and Nigel Austin were pushed over the line and there was an individual recall. Peter Mountford took the lead followed by Annette Walter. Eventually Annette caught Peter and then on the approach to the finish Eddie, who had recovered well from his recall at the start, caught Peter near the finish.



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Race two started immediately after race one. The line was biased again, but this time the fleet got away cleanly. The wind continued to back so that it was almost possible to make the first beat on one tack. Henry Jaggars was first around the mark followed by Eddie. However, they then sailed towards the wrong mark which resulted in them sailing towards the bank and out of the wind. This allowed the rest to catch up. Ben Palmer, followed by Chris Robinson, headed very low and got past. The wind dropped, but these two were able to get around the wind mark on the last of the wind and sailed into a substantial lead. The dropping wind resulted in the fleet becoming very spread out and so the race officer elected to shorten the course after one lap. Ben won, followed by Chris. Annette led the rest of the fleet and took third place.

Race three started after lunch. The change in wind direction required a change in course. A long beat was still possible, but this time the downwind legs formed a rectangle. On the first leg the wind dropped away, but the sun came out which warmed the competitors. As they approached the windward mark the wind began to return, but from a different direction, so the leg was now a reach. Eddie was first around the first mark followed by Izac Dodds. The change in wind direction changed the second leg from a reach to close hauled. The wind then veered further, changing the leg to a beat, which favoured the leaders and the fleet spread out. As the fleet beat or reached back up the lake the wind dropped again so the race officer elected to finish after one lap. On the final leg the wind returned to its original direction, and as Eddie and Izac crossed the line it picked up allowing the rest of the fleet to finish quickly behind them.

After three races Eddie was leading with 3 points followed by Annette (4 points) and Ben (5 points). However, the final race would require them to count an additional race and with different discards the places could easily change. In addition, a win in the final race would allow Izac or Peter to win overall, while Henry and Chris could still claim second overall.

With the wind returning to its original direction no change of course was required for the final race. Like race three the wind began to drop again. This time Izac beat Eddie to the windward mark. As they finished the downwind legs it began to rain and the wind increased to its strongest strength of the day. The fleet were able to plane into the leeward mark and the race officer elected to sail a second lap. The change in wind also resulted in a change in fortune throughout the fleet. Izac was passed by Eddie and then Ben, Peter and Nigel. However, a couple of 720s prevented the latter three from catching Eddie, who increased his lead to take the win. Nigel was second, followed by Peter. Those further down the fleet had to contend with a couple of capsized Streakers and Solos.

Eddie's win in the final race gave him first place overall. Annette's good results from the first three races were enough to give her second place, while a fourth place in the final race put Ben on equal points with Annette. However, he lost on count back having a first and fourth compared to Annette's first and third.