

# **Comet National Championship**

## **Bala SC 2022**

### **Overall Impressions**

It was a real case of third time lucky, as 26 Comets contested the National Championships over the August Bank Holiday weekend, including a large number of first time entrants to the National Championships.

Lake Bala is the largest lake in Wales and we used a sailing area of about 1.5 miles by 0.5 miles, binoculars were needed to see some marks!! We shared the water with two other fleets, an Asymmetric fleet and a General Handicap fleet, which caused a few interesting moments!!

On arrival the lake was like a sheet of glass and the prospect of 3 races, back to back, seemed very doubtful with a wind forecast of 3mph – 5mph over the afternoon.

### **Saturday**

#### **Race 1**

P shaped course.

The leading Comets caught up and passed the general handicap boats which had started 3 minutes earlier. Eddie Pope led until the penultimate leg, when the wind filled in from behind and he was “swallowed up” by some following Comets and general handicap boats. At the last mark there were about 8 boats from mixed fleets close together, so mark rounding was critical. Pete Coop gained the inside berth and called “water” on the Blaze alongside him, which in turn caused Eddie to give the mark a wider berth than ideal. Bob Dodds tried to get into the space left. Izac Dodds found some free air. Chris Robinson took a wide route around the mark at speed. The short beat to the finish was very tricky, but Pete kept his lead, followed by Izac, Chris, Eddie and Bob, all close together in that order.

#### **Race 2**

There was a delay waiting for the wind. A windward leeward course with a shorter beat was set. The wind changed just before the start, resulting in a reaching start. Two laps were sailed with some new faces at the front. The wind was steadier and a bit stronger than in race 1 and we didn't catch as many of the general handicap boats. A “breakaway” group of 4 Comets developed. On lap 2 Sarah-Jane Critchley found a lift on the left side of the beat to move into first and held her position until the finish. She was ecstatic and tapped her foredeck in glee! Pete

Coop was on the right side of that beat, missed the lift, and relinquished places to George Coop and Eddie. Eddie came 2nd, followed by George then Pete.

### **Race 3**

The planned break ashore was abandoned as there was insufficient time. At the pin end of the line Sarah Jane Critchley hit the pin allowing Michael Thompson to get the perfect pin end start. There was more wind at the start of the race, but it dropped on the approach to the windward mark. Pete Coop led, followed by a second group of boats led by Steve Bellamy. Pete developed a comfortable lead and kept in front to the end. Downwind the wind seemed to pick up and the boats behind looked as if they might catch up, but this never happened. Eddie was buried in the pack and hit Bob. After doing his turns he was close behind at least 6 boats on the final run. However, he went high into pressure and gained water at the mark over Andy. The race was shortened at one lap. So the finishing order was Pete, Eddie, Andy, Sarah-Jane then Bob.

A fantastic BBQ and live music ended the day.

### **DAY 2**

Tricky winds again and only 2 of the 3 scheduled races were held, as the start was delayed waiting for the wind to settle Also we needed to get off the water for the AGM and the all important pizza delivery!

### **Race 4**

b shaped course.

The wind shifted on the first beat and those on left hand side of the course got lifted so much they reached into the windward mark. Eddie was first around the windward mark followed by Chris Robinson and a completely astonished Nigel Fern! Pete Coop sailed into second on the downwind leg. On the second lap at the penultimate (wing) mark the wind dropped. The lead boats got around the mark in wind although boats behind began to catch up. The shorten course flag went up and the race was finished at two laps. Eddie benefitted from a big lift on the first beat and had a lead of at least 50 yards over Pete, until just before the final mark. That mark was in a big wind shadow containing all the general handicap fleet. The wind started to fill in from behind, and Pete skillfully navigated past Eddie and the general handicap boats by heading up back into the wind once he rounded the mark. Eddie just managed to hold off the other Comets, despite being impeded by a Solo. The back of the fleet became becalmed and they all closed up with Helen Evans catching up from a long way behind. When the wind returned it had changed 180 degrees. As the last boat finished the wind changed by another 90 degrees so the race officer

had to reset the course for the next race, but by the time he had done this the wind had changed again! This happened a couple more times before he got the fleet away for race 5.

### **Race 5**

A triangular course with the beat across the lake.

Bob and Pete broke away, Half-way up the beat the wind changed to give a starboard tack reach to the mark. It then changed again to give a port tack reach and then a further shift back to a beat. On the runs the wind began to drop and the race officer shortened at one lap. This time the wind increased in time to bring the back half of the fleet across the line and back to shore in time for the AGM and pizza.

Pete carefully covered Bob to take another win. There was a battle behind too. Eddie came 3rd followed by Izac then George.

### **DAY 3**

If the wind allowed, then 3 back to back races were planned, to enable the full 8 race series. However, the wind did not oblige and only one race was possible before the scheduled end time.

### **Race 6**

P shaped course

The start was postponed to 11.30 meaning that only 6 races would be completed. Thus 2 discards were allowed, to the relief of a few helms. The left hand side of the beat seemed to be favoured initially, but a significant wind shift made a move to the right necessary. The line had a pin end bias. On the first beat the left hand side of the course was favoured and Michael Thompson was first to the windward mark followed by Bob Dodds. Bob passed Michael to move into first. On the second lap the wind dropped and shifted and some boats had to tack to reach the wind mark. As a result the fleet closed up and there were many changes in position. Ben Palmer almost came to grief as one of the huge Laser Asymmetrics came barreling into a mark without water leaving Ben with no option but to move aside as otherwise he would have been cut in two! The race officer elected to make the race longer, rather than attempt a short second race in the time available. Therefore, a third lap was sailed. This caused a little confusion as the general handicap fleets were stopped but we continued. Some Comets pulled aside thinking that they had finished! Sarah Jane Critchley ended up rafted on the committee boat at the start of the third lap.

The fleet then adjourned to the cafe balcony that had been the preserve of Liz and Norah for the weekend for the prize giving. Everybody received a memento of the event and there were prizes aplenty.

A huge vote of thanks was given to Mike Allen, Commodore of Bala SC who was to be seen doing just about everything from welcoming helms, organizing the safety teams, running the races, cooking and serving the BBQ to name just a few. Oh and don't forget he had tried twice before to get this event off the ground!

Top 3 were in

1<sup>st</sup> - Pete Coop

2<sup>nd</sup> - Eddie Pope

3<sup>rd</sup> - Bob Dodds

Outside of there were:

Sarah-Jane Critchley, First Lady and First Newcomer

Andy Dale, First Veteran

Stephen Bellamy, First Ancient Mariner

Tobias Hancox, First Junior

Steve Dale, Committee prize

Winsford Flash SC was awarded the Team prize.

Compiled from reports by Pete Coop, Chris Robinson, Eddie Pope and Nigel Fern

Images of the event are available on the Bala SC website.