



# Comet Class Association

## Burghfield SC Comet Open, Saturday 20th April 2024

Chris Robinson

Thirteen competitors entered the Comet Open at Burghfield Sailing Club. There was a strong breeze with squalls followed by calm patches which were very shifty. Consequently, there were a few capsizes throughout the fleet during the day. As the wind was across the lake the Race Officer, Dereck Lovegrove, set a two-lap course with two beats each lap connected with a broad reach or run, but no gybes.

For race one, which was held in the strongest wind, the line was biased with the pin end favoured. Ben Palmer was right on the pin and went into the lead. Eddie Pope and Alistair Stagg also started at this end and were behind Ben at the windward mark. Jacky Stagg, Chris Robinson and Peter Mountford followed. A squall resulted in a fast plane down to the leeward mark and Alistair was caught by the boats behind. The top positions looked settled by the end of the first lap. However, at the first mark of lap two the wind became very fickle. Ben, leading got around in wind and sailed off into the back of the Solo fleet never to be seen again. Eddie kept in second place, but places three to five changed at the mark and then downwind. On the beat and final run Chris caught and overtook Eddie.

In race two the line had been adjusted and was square. Those that went up the right-hand side of the course were first to the mark: Jacky followed by Chris and Eddie. Sailing up to the second windward mark the fleet bunched and Alistair, Peter, Ben and Michael Ettershank joined the lead group and there were many changes of position. Coming onto the final run Alistair was leading, but Michael was right behind him. However, Alistair was able to hold off Michael until the leeward mark and the short beat to the finish.

In race three the left-hand side of the course was favoured on the first beat despite the Solo fleet running down from the windward mark through this part of the course. Eddie and Chris took this side and were first around the mark. Chris dropped down the fleet, eventually being caught by Peter, Michael and Alistair who took second, third and fourth.

As the first three races had produced three different winners, the competition was wide open. In the final race there was no clear leader all the way up the first beat. Eddie was first around the first mark followed by Peter. On the run the lead group elected to take the two islands to windward despite everyone taking them to leeward the previous three races. This proved to be slower and the lead group were caught, but not overtaken by the chasing pack taking the leeward route. However, the fastest route turned out to be between the two islands and this route was only taken by Jacky and it allowed her to take the lead. During the course of the second beat and run the leading group were caught and by the start of the second lap the order was Eddie, Alistair and Chris. The fleet spread out and no further changes in position looked likely. However, approaching the finish the wind dropped and became fickle allowing Chris to get behind Alistair who was trying to break cover with Eddie to get the top position. Eddie finished first, and a tacking duel ensued between Alistair and Chris, with Alistair just holding on to second place.