



**British Universities
and Colleges Sport**

**British Universities'
Sailing Association**



**Preview
1 November 2017**

British University Fleet Racing Championships 2017



Slow Fleet off the start at the BUCS Fleet Racing Championships 2016 ©Tony Mapplebeck

Another record entry, with more all-male and all-female teams competing in the Team Championships

With a record entry for the annual BUCS Fleet Racing Championships, over 230 student sailors, from a record 25 universities, are entered to race on Draycote Water this weekend. The **British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS)** and **British University Sailing Association (BUSA)** annual Fleet Racing Championships are being hosted by the **University of Warwick Sailing Club**.

The winning helm in the Slow Handicap fleet in 2016, **Matt Lulham-Robinson** of Bath summed up the 2016 edition: "This was my first BUSA Fleets. I really enjoyed the event. I had not sailed a GP before. The socials were really good fun. It was a great opportunity to get to know other teams, to catch up with many I had sailed with in the past and to meet new people. I liked the format, quick races, especially as it was pretty cold. It was close racing - interesting to be back lake sailing after a lot of coastal racing - shifty, tricky stuff. The Fleet Champs are really important, early in the calendar. Most going to university have not done much team racing before; 80% - 90% come from fleet racing, whether squads or club sailing. So, the Fleets provide a good transition into university sailing". He is back with Ellen Devereux this year to defend their title!

Following a successful Championship in 2016 at Draycote Water SC and in the light of positive feedback, the BUSA Committee sought bids from university sailing clubs (USCs) to host the 2017 event and was delighted to award this once again to the University of Warwick. The Fleet Championship involves sailors and their clubs travelling with their boats, unlike team racing, match racing and yachting events, which draw on more locally-resourced and provided boats. Many have expressed approval for the event being held, with good access, in the middle of the country.



Fireflies round the windward mark at the 2016 Championships ©Tony Mapplebeck

The Fleets is the first national event of the academic year. Traditionally, it attracts a wide range of sailors, from freshers to postgrad. research students, no exception this year. For freshers, whether hot-shot youth sailors or club racers, this can be a way into student sailing on familiar terms. Each year, many experienced and successful performance sailors participate. For many serious team racers and keelboat sailors – which takes up much of the student time-on-the-water each season - this event combines a weekend of competitive fleet racing early in the year, with an opportunity for clubs to achieve some team-building and bonding that will underpin subsequent progress in competition through the year.

Racing is in four fleets: Fast and Slow Handicap, Laser and Firefly, the latter being popular as a university sailing club's own boats can be used. Many sailors use their own boats in the other fleets, or beg, borrow and charter. There is a spread of experience and skill across all the fleets.



Laser start at the 2016 Championships © Malcolm Lewin www.malcolmlewinphotography.zenfolio.com/busu

In addition to the individual boat competing with the objective of medalling in its Fleet, there is a strong inter-university competitive edge, with the top four boats in each fleet earning “BUCS points” – to the financial advantage of the successful universities.

But there are also male and female Team Championships. Universities with at least three boats of the same gender competing in each. In addition to the two Team Trophies, there are significant BUCS points to be

earned by up to eight university teams. Having been introduced three years ago, it is noticeable that many university sailing clubs are increasingly seeking to compete effectively across both Team Championships, although there continues to be the opportunity for mixed double-handers also competing in three of the fleets.



Fast Handicap at the 2016 Fleet Racing Championships ©Tony Mapplebeck

This year Plymouth, Southampton, Exeter, Bath, Swansea, Birmingham, Cardiff and Loughborough are all sending both male and female teams to compete in both team competitions. Bournemouth, Bristol, Edinburgh, Manchester, Southampton Solent, Surrey and West of England have entered sufficient teams to compete in the male team competition, as well as other boats in the four fleets. Durham and Nottingham have sufficient female boats entered to compete in the female team competition, as well as other boats in the four fleets. Cambridge, East Anglia, Oxford Brookes, Portsmouth, St Andrews, Sheffield and Warwick are also competing in the Championship.

The largest entry comes from Plymouth. Its Captain, Richard Abendstern, emphasised the popularity of this event, both for “the high standard of competition and, yet, being really sociable, early in the academic year”. With important support from their Athletic Union, the aim in putting the team together has been to combine experience across the double-hander fleets, with bringing in nine freshers (amongst whom is a former World Champion!).



Matt Lulham-Robinson & Ellen Devereux in their GP in 2016 return to defend their Slow Fleet title in 2017



Laura Gilmore in 2016 returns for 2017

Exeter’s Captain, Jess Hammett also spoke of some of the attractive characteristics of the Fleets, in that “one can compete without a qualifying process, catching up with friends one would not normally see, and it being good to be back in fleet racing mode, where most students started their sailing careers, perhaps without quite the pressure (Exeter won the Sunsail University Club Championship 2017 having won the BUCS Match Racing and Team Racing, together with high points in the Yachting) – good to kick off the year”

Will Ward, Captain of Bath enthused: “Great way to start the year, lot of good fleet racers and good to meet everyone. We have again entered sufficient boats for both male and female Championships, but have aimed at a greater spread across the fleets, including bringing in some freshers in two boats. We want to take Bath

to be one of the best sailing universities in the country this year, the aim being to build a legacy for the future of Bath Sailing”.

Swansea was not represented in 2016. Their Captain, James Curtis, confirmed that they are back, with full teams for both the female and male Championships “to make use of our lovely new Fireflies, and on a mission to do as well as we can and as payback for our Athletic Union’s support. It is a brilliant event – many friends to catch up with and the largest event in the Calendar, apart from the Team Racing Championships”.



The large Firefly Fleet in 2016 © Malcolm Lewin www.malcolmlewinphotography.zenfolio.com/bus

The winner of the Fast Handicap in 2015, Alex Jardine (“in my 'handicap bandit' Albacore”), when at Liverpool, competed with Durham last year (“in a 1979 Laser”), and is, this year, helping a chartered 2000 (“condition unknown”). As Captain this year, he is leading a full women’s team, together with an all-male and a mixed boat. Durham’s sailors include a fresher who was part of the winning youth team at this year’s Wilson, a former 29er European champion and a Laser sailor who has competed internationally for Hong Kong. But, sadly, Durham Commodore Maddie Harris is “away on placement chasing Grey seals on the Isle of May”. Alex summed up, “Team Durham are very much looking forward to the Championship and has every chance of competing as individual boats in the fleets and in the women's team event. The BUCS Fleet Nationals adds an entirely different dimension to university sailing and allows one to compete against a broad selection of the UKs most talented young sailors, who have developed in an array of different youth classes. There is always the correct balance between competition and enjoyment, giving one the opportunity to compete and socialise with friends who one may not usually see on the regional team racing circuit”. It seems that the message is pretty consistent!



Arthur Henderson (Cambridge) and Phil Aldhous (Manchester) helping the leading boats here in 2016; both return for the 2017 edition © Tony Mapplebeck

BUSA President, Peter Saxton, wished all a good Championships: “Thanks to Warwick for hosting for a second year at the central inland venue of Draycote Water Sailing Club. It’s encouraging to see the increased interest in the event so early in the university season. Good luck to all competing this weekend!”

One way and another this should be another great Championship. If you are not competing and unable to be at Draycote Water SC to watch (and in Leamington Spa at night to join in the Warwick socials), we will aim to keep you informed on the Championship Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/131157180841558/>. We will also try to tweet on @BUSASailing and build our presence on Instagram – BUSAMedia. All information about the event is to be found on the BUSA Event page at <http://busa.co.uk/championships/bucs-busa-fleet-racing-championships>



Slow Fleet at the BUCS Fleet Racing Championships 2016 at Draycote Water SC
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