



**British Universities
and Colleges Sport**

**British Universities'
Sailing Association**



3 November 2016

British University Fleet Racing Championships 2016-17



Record entry for BUCS Fleets at Draycote

With a record entry for the annual Fleet Racing Championships, over 240 student sailors, from a record 25 universities, are heading to 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**.

Following a successful Championship in 2015 held at Cardiff, which achieved a broader participation across British universities, BUSA was delighted to award the hosting of the event to the University of Warwick SC. This brings the event into the Midlands, further facilitating access to the one student national championship that involves sailors and their clubs travelling with their boats to the event. (team racing, match racing and yachting events draw on more locally-resourced boats).

The event is the first national event of the academic year. Traditionally, it attracts a wide range of sailors, from freshers to postgrad. research students. For freshers, whether hot-shot youth sailors or club racers, this can be a way into student sailing on familiar terms. Each year, certainly true of this one, several experienced performance sailors participate, including members of RYA Olympic squads and top Class competitors. For many serious team racers and keelboat sailors – which takes up much of the student time-on-the-water - this event provides a weekend of competitive racing and an opportunity for university sailing clubs team-building and bonding to underpin subsequent progress in competition through the year.



Fast Handicap Fleet, BUCS-BUSA National Fleet Championships 2015, Cardiff

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

There is the competitive objective for each boat of medalling in each of the four Fleets, as well as earning "BUCS points" – to the financial advantage of the university sailing clubs of the top four boats in each fleet.

But there are also male and female Team Championships and significant BUCS points to be earned by up to eight university teams with three boats in which all the sailors are of the same gender. Having been introduced a couple of years ago, it is noticeable that some university sailing clubs are increasingly working to compete effectively in both Team Championships, although there continues to be opportunity for mixed double-handers also competing in three of the Fleets.



Laser Fleet at the BUCS-BUSA National Fleet Championships 2015, Cardiff

This year, there is a significant increase in the number of boats entered, rising from 128 to 136, exceeding the target. Whilst Plymouth and Cardiff each have a small increase in entries and Southampton and Exeter remain amongst the largest teams, there is a notably broader spread, with greater representation across the

country. Durham and Southampton Solent have entered large teams, and Nottingham has returned to the Championships after a year away. Birmingham, Loughborough, Liverpool, Manchester, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Sussex and Warwick have all entered more competitors.



Slow Handicap Fleet, BUCS-BUSA National Fleet Championships 2015, Cardiff

The winning helm of the Fast Handicap Fleet last year, Alex Jardine, his Albacore being the sole representative of Liverpool, looks back at his almer mater and sees a doubling of entry this year. But he is now a postgraduate in Durham and contributing to a full team of three male and three female boats Durham is sending.. He said, “Durham is in with a chance; we have competing boats across all the fleets. The team is looking forward to competing in a different discipline this year” [Durham medalled in all the other three - Team, Match and Yacht – BUCS-BUSA Championships in 2015-16]. For his part, Alex returns to his Laser this year, recognising that it is a significantly competitive fleet.

Matt Wallis (returning to the Fleets for his fourth year) and his crew since 2014, Jolyon Ferron (BUSA Yachting Captain) won the Firefly Fleet in 2014 for Cardiff, but want to set the record straight after they had to concede to team mates, Craig Dibb and Charlie Cox, in 2015, taking second place in the Firefly Fleet. Matt is looking forward to Draycote Water, where he anticipates similar conditions to the home waters. Cardiff are defending the Men’s Team Championship, and Matt noted that they have lost several of their big names from last year. However, “we have some good freshers that are stepping up, and probably our best helm is Emily Peters, our Captain”. We understand that Cardiff has a secret weapon in the Laser Fleet in fresher, Duncan Jamieson, from Australia, a former ISAF World Cup competitor.



BUCS-BUSA National Fleet Championships 2015, Cardiff

Among the Midlands teams back in strength this year will be Nottingham. Team captain, Mike Starkie reveals why NUSC, which competed in Plymouth in 2014, did not enter in 2016, but is definitely back this year. “We had new boats delivered last year, but had a lot of fitting out to do. Now we have had them used for team racing through 2015-16, and we are really keen to get back to the Fleets. We see it as a step in broadening the Club’s scope and, obviously, there is a convenience in access to Draycote. It will be interesting to see the Championships held on a large inland water, rather than the sea, this year”. He went on to hint that Nottingham too has a hidden (fresher) weapon in former National and European Mirror Champion, Rachel Grayson, who came fourth – the highest ever placed female helm – at the Endeavour Trophy, among and above some of the great and the good of British Class racing. We hope she will build a full women’s NUSC team for next year’s Fleets.

Mary Henderson is returning to the Fleets this year, sailing with Lucy Lowe for Southampton (Wessex) Sailing Club in the Firefly Fleet, after a year away. In 2014, with Emma Helm, she was the leading-placed Southampton women's sailor (4th) in the Fast Handicap Fleet, when the University won the female Team Championship. She told us "we are taking a big team to this year's Fleets, both male and female teams. It will be interesting, as an experienced south coast sailor, not to be on tidal waters, but, fortunately, it looks as though we shall have some wind! It is also great to see the event drawing into the competition a range of different universities from all over". Southampton's Morgan Dibb and Charlie Darling led last year's Team Championship win, and they are back for more in their RS200, this year in the Slow Handicap Fleet.



BUCS-BUSA National Fleet Championships 2015, Cardiff

The excitement of entering their team at the Fleets was captured for us by Maddie Harris, Captain of the Durham team. Entering had been a matter of consequence to start with – one sailor needed a trailer, creating space for more boats on a multiple stacker. This encouraged more to think of going and soon there were full teams, both female and male. Great team building opportunity and great to be competing in Fleets, as well as the other racing disciplines. Apparently (and sadly), however, they could not find a sufficiently high performance craft to tantalise Ko Chuan Yang out of his Bosun's hut, after his year of successes in those other disciplines.

One way and another this should be a really great Championship. If you are not competing and unable to be at Draycote Water SC to watch (and in Leamington at night to join in the Warwick socials), we will try and keep you informed on the Championship Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1772402963037651/>.

All information about the event is to be found on the BUSA Event page at

<http://www.busa.co.uk/events/bucs-fleet-racing-2016/>



The Firefly Fleet at the 2015 National Fleet Championships at Cardiff