



**British Universities
and Colleges Sport**

**British Universities'
Sailing Association**



**Preview
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British University Fleet Racing Championships 2018



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Another cracking Champs in prospect at Draycote, with close competition expected in all four classes

With another record entry for the annual BUCS Fleet Racing Championships, 250 student sailors, from 25 universities, are racing 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 once again by the **University of Warwick Sailing Club**.

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; this is certainly evident in the entry this year. 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.

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 four 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.

This year Bath, Bristol, Cardiff, Exeter and Southampton are all sending both male and female teams to compete in both team competitions. Durham and Nottingham also have sufficient boats to enter the female team competition, as well as other boats in the four fleets. Birmingham, Bournemouth, Imperial, Newcastle, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Solent, Swansea and Warwick have boats entered for the male team competition, as well as other boats in the four fleets. Brunel, East Anglia, Edinburgh, Sheffield and West of England all have several boats entered, and three students are entered for the Arts University Bournemouth, Queen Mary University of London and Sussex University.

The Laser Fleet is slightly smaller this year (28 boats), but there are ten Radials again. But, it is pretty clear that the standard of sailing that can be anticipated remains high, indeed perhaps enhanced. Last year's BUCS Laser Champion, Anthony Parke of Bournemouth has to defend his title having only done one event, "with two days in the boat in the course of the year. There are several sailors up there, and they have been sailing competitively, particularly Jake Farren Price of Bristol and Lewis Smith of Edinburgh". Both raced in the recent Laser Qualifier and were at the U21 Laser Europeans in Sweden in the summer. Lewis said "going by last year, all changes and snakes & ladders, this should be close competition, I was leading after the first day last year (he finished 4th overall), and it would be good to get my own back this time!"



Jake is "looking forward to Draycote. Lewis is up there; he has been training all year. I managed to get U21 Youth Squad selection and did the Worlds, and the Europeans, as well as Kiel. But we will have to watch the Radials, especially if it is windy." Perhaps not surprising that he is mindful of the Radials. There is evidently quite a lot of talent there. Anya Haji-Michael of Exeter and Jackie Truhol of Durham, who both contributed to the success of their respective teams points last year, are back in their Radials. And Anya is now joined by Monika Mikkola, who qualified Finland for the 2020 Olympics with a 4th in the *Laser World championships* in Aarhus in August, so maybe Exeter can expect their Lasers to help with their ambition to be top female team again.

There are 65 Fireflies entered again, which should make for another busy time for the PRO. Giles Kuzak & George Zavos of Birmingham, who were 2nd in the Firefly Fleet last year, are back. Giles, who had been reading the weather, anticipated it being windy and reflected, "we are a pretty light pair, but would love to medal again. We have here other good teams coming with us. But you just never know. One of the attractions of this event is that many really good youth sailors from other classes come here to sail in the Firefly. It is always uncertain what competition will be like"



We did not quite manage to catch one of the leaders from the Fast Handicap... well, they are difficult to catch. But twice BUCS Champion helm, Crispin Beaumont is back for Southampton, so he must be one to beat. But we did make contact with two leading GP helms en route to Draycote. Matt Lulham-Robinson of Bath was Champion of the Slow Handicap in 2016 but had to concede first place to Nick Devereux of Plymouth last year, so the rivalry is bound to surface. Matt has lost Nick's sister as his crew after two years, but says he has "a fine gent" in his new one, Will Ward. And he happened to mention that they were borrowing a premium boat from Dave Winder himself (hmm, do we sense some power-play?). Nick, who is joined this year by Alex Hughes (another former 420 sailor deprived of his wire, but I will just have to hike!), also spoke of another pair of GP14 sailors to watch, Gareth Gallagher & Oli Goodhead of Solent. Both Nick and Matt were pleased at their teams coming to the event, although Plymouth sadly had been unable to make up a full women's team this year. Matt also mentioned that, while Bath had both female and male teams, there had been less new club members keen to do Fleets this year (evidently recruitment to team racing was strong and three Bath teams had been to Reading's Wet Dream a couple of weekends back).



But the Slow Fleet is not all about GP14s perhaps; indeed will the former 420 sailors regret their choice of the GP this time? In some past years, the fleet has been dominated by 420s, perhaps especially when there has been bigger wind. There are two from Exeter and one from Solent this year. Interestingly, there has been a last-minute change-around in the Exeter Women's team, with the Emmas, McKnight and Baker (Bronze in their 420 in 2016) separating to sail in different boats; surely a temporary expedient, all team tactics we suspect. And there are Anyway, the Exeter's team captain spoke of their excitement en route to the event, fired up in both teams, but the women fired up to try to retain the Team Trophy for a fourth year.

For information about the event, see <http://busa.co.uk/championships/bucs-busa-fleet-racing-championships> and follow the news on BUSA Sailing FB at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/busasailing/>. And Josh East is back with his camera!



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