



Press Release

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Leeds University's Halloween Howler starts the year: Cambridge sets the pace



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Thirteen British University teams converged on Leeds and West Riding Sailing Club for the first of the season's student team racing events that will run through to next March. In addition to the strong turnout from northern universities - Lancaster, Newcastle (2 teams), Sheffield (2), as well as Leeds Freshers and Leeds Old Boys - teams travelled from as far as the University of West of England (UWE) at Bristol, Cambridge (2) and Nottingham (3)

USCs have had a busy few weeks of the new academic year, recruiting new sailors at Freshers' Week, ensuring a fun start with a good emphasis on the social side, but getting sailing underway at their nearest sailing club – often a Wednesday afternoon activity with both a steep learning curve for new sailors and the beginning of team race training and team selection for the more experienced.

The effectiveness of this early work was in evidence at West Riding last weekend. Several USCs were commenting on the strong numbers of fresher sailors this year – Nottingham had

three teams competing at the Howler, and we are pretty sure that we heard some seasoned team racers commenting positively that Nottingham 1 seemed to have several freshers!

Typically, USCs saw this event as the start a serious season of competition aimed at qualifying for the BUCS/BUSA National Championship next April. With area Qualifiers, together with a further chance to qualify a team through national Playoffs, in February/March, every opportunity will be taken to gain competition experience. And the criteria for a 'good' event will include the number of races that can be squeezed in by the Race Committee and the standard of competition.



In sight of the West Riding clubhouse © Chris Beck

The other important criteria for a successful weekend will be the social programme laid on by the host USC. Indeed, particularly at this early stage of the year, this may be the primary consideration for some! – it's all about bonding! The Facebook write-ups after the Howler tell tales of many escapades, in the spirit of Halloween, and most sailors seemed to have the stamina to arrive ready and focussed for action on the water, even if some did look at the lunch laid on by the professional caterers with some caution!

It was summed up by Newcastle USC's Media Officer, Chris Woods, in his USC Facebook blog: "we made what surely must be Newcastle sailing history by being the first team at the club.....cheers for a great weekend, hope you all had as much fun as I think I did!". On (possibly 'sober') reflection, he added: "The weekend was a great success and a brilliant way to start the season. With a good balance of competitive racing and lively socials, it was perfect way to introduce the new Freshers into team racing. The highlight of the weekend came when our racing captain capsized a minute before our start, but we still managed to win the race without her!



© Chris Beck

This event was wholly run by the University Sailing Club, which is sponsored by AmeriCamp.com and First40Charter.com. A team of fifteen volunteers was led by Commodore, Ali Sims, who acted as OOD. The racing itself was managed by members of the Committee, together with two experienced Umpires. Wakefield Sea Cadets drove additional RIBs they supplied so as to ensure smooth changeovers on the water. Sunny weather and a fair breeze on Saturday set the tone for the event. By the end of sailing on the first day, 45 races of the Round Robin had been sailed. The Cambridge, and two of the Nottingham, teams were heading the leader board on average scores. A further 33 races of the Round Robin were completed on Sunday, before Semi Finals and Finals. Cambridge Pink beat Nottingham 1 in the first of the semis, and Cambridge Blue, the Leeds Old Boys. In the all-Cambridge Final, the Blue team had the edge.

Secretary of UWE SC, Jilly Darling summed up the event: "Overall it was a really good weekend. The racing was well run and Ali Sims and the rest of Leeds were working so hard to make sure everything ran smoothly! UWE had a great weekend, very competitive and extremely well run racing, as well as the socials to give it that "uni" feel. Special mention has to go to Ali Sims for putting everything he had into the event."

Jonny Leeding, Captain of Nottingham added: "We really enjoyed our weekend at the Halloween Howler. The club has been very fortunate to have an influx of very good freshers and everyone enjoyed getting to know each other better. We hope to have 3 teams competing this year, and it looks there could be some intense internal rivalry with the third team managing to beat the firsts this weekend! Although the 'firsts' then went on to make it to the Semis"



Cambridge Blue © Tony Mapplebeck

Cambridge Captain, Josh Flack explained "we went to the Howler having done little training so far, but knowing that we have a talented squad. So, we really just wanted to see where we stand, and start to work on the basics of spotting your combination and pulling the conversions. To have both teams do that well was a very encouraging start to the season! We had a little bit of trepidation with the slow start on Saturday morning, but after that we had a great event and whacked through the races. It's not often that you get close to 20 races in a weekend. So a massive thanks to Ali and all the Leeds gang for that!". A great start to the 2012-13 university team racing season.

Ends

With special thanks to Chris Beck of Warwick University for his photographs. More, including all the teams, may be found on BUSA Facebook. See also some below.

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Very analytic! Cambridge Blue and Pink de-brief after each race © Tony Mapplebeck



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