

West Kirby Sailing Club, Wirral

Wilson Trophy 2013

Press Release

5 May 2013



© Tim Piper www.juicephotography.co.uk

Wessex Exempt are worthy winners of 64th Wilson Trophy

The 2013 British Open Team Racing Championship for the Wilson Trophy was won by Wessex Exempt today (5 May) in a thrilling best of five final sailed on West Kirby's marine lake. The six sailors overcame stiff competition from 34 teams from as far afield as America, Ireland and across the UK, eventually meeting Grafham Gorillas in the tense final round of the three-day event.

Wessex Exempt (Ben Ainsworth, Rachel Williamson, Jonathon Pinner, Kerry Capps, Tom Heywood, Catherine Friend) put in a consistent performance throughout the 323-race Swiss League preliminary rounds to qualify for the quarter-finals in second place, having won 14 of their 19 races.

Home-team favourites and current World Team Racing Champions, West Kirby Hawks, qualified at the top of the Swiss League, subsequently beating Royal Thames Yacht Club 2-0 in the quarters. But a shock 2-1 defeat in the semi-finals saw the home team favourites knocked out of the event by Grafham Gorillas.

After a solid performance in this morning's races, Grafham Gorillas found their form when it mattered, storming their way into the final having already beaten RF Hoosiers - over-night leaders who had been hotly tipped for the Trophy final - in the quarter final.

American team, Rhode Island Pistols, also sailed a determined series, making it to the semi-final only to find their boat handling skills coming under pressure in a 2-0 defeat by eventual winners, Wessex Exempt, who had previously dispensed with Spinnaker Auspicious in their 2-1 quarter-final match.

So it was Grafham Gorillas who faced Wessex Exempt in the best-of-five final.

As the teams took to the boats sailing a brand new flight of equally matched Fireflies - thanks to support from sponsor DHL - the cheers and shouts of support came from the crowds of

spectators gathered in the grandstand and lining the shore of the marine lake. Sunshine and good breeze had the recipe for champagne team racing conditions, and the spectators were not disappointed.

Race one saw a win to Grafham following a penalty on the finish line, but Wessex came back with a stronger start to finish in a 1,3 winning combination in race two. The third race was closely contested, with boats from both teams taking penalty turns on the second leg, but Wessex gained the advantage on the run and held it to the finish.

The fourth race saw Grafham start strong; taking an early 1,2 combination, they consolidated their win with some text book team racing manoeuvres.

And so it came down to the final fifth race decider to determine who would be the new Wilson Trophy Champions. With a Grafham boat over the line, Wessex quickly took control, rounding the first mark in a solid 1,2 position which they never relinquished.



© Tim Piper www.juicephotography.co.uk

After crossing the finish line, both teams returned to the start area for the traditional sail past of the grandstand in front of the cheering crowds, with runners up, Grafham Gorillas, stopping their boats to applaud the winners in a true show of sportsmanship.

Speaking at the prize-giving, Commodore of West Kirby Sailing Club, David Taylor, who was also an umpire at this weekend's event, congratulated the competitors and said: "That was certainly one of the most sporting finals at the Wilson Trophy in a long time; it was fantastic to watch.

He added: "A huge thanks goes to all our sponsors - DHL, Carlsberg, GJW Direct, MI Finance, Speed Medical and Musto – and to the organisers and the volunteers of West Kirby Sailing Club for making the event possible."

Accepting the prestigious Wilson Trophy, Wessex Exempt team-member, Jon Pinner, said: "This is my tenth year at the Wilson Trophy, an event with an incredible history. Thank you not just to everyone at the event this year, but for the last ten years, and all the years before that. This event is a real institution. We have been smiling all weekend; it's been fantastic and we are delighted to have won. The cheering from the crowds on the last beat was amazing, and thank you to our friends, Grafham Gorillas, for a really fantastic final."

Winners of the Under 21 Trophy was Bristol University, who finished a credible 11th place overall. The Wilson Plate awarded to the first team not to make the quarter-final cut, West Kirby Sailing Club.

Of the 34 teams from USA, Ireland and across the UK, perhaps the team facing the steepest learning curve of all was the British Sailing Team, fronted by 2012 Olympic silver medallists, Luke Patience and Stuart Bithell. Although disappointed not to make the quarter-final cut, the duo found themselves inspired by this, their first ever team racing event.

Speaking after racing today, Stuart Bithell said: “The event has been unbelievable; we have had an amazing three days here. We may not have had such a great time results-wise ourselves, but today it has been an absolute pleasure to watch the world’s best team racers here in action, and to watch our friends in the final. If only we had been able to see them show us how it’s done beforehand, we could have brought a notebook! But there has been a brilliant atmosphere, and it’s easy to see why this event just keeps getting bigger and better. We hope to be back next year!”



© Tim Piper www.juicephotography.co.uk

Visiting the event earlier in the weekend was John Derbyshire, RYA Performance Manager, who works closely with the British Sailing Team. He said: “This has been great opportunity for the British Sailing Team members to gain some exposure to team racing, which uses many of the skills needed for medal racing at the Olympics. It adds a whole new dimension which we hope will help these guys on their way to Rio 2016. We hope to encourage more members of the British Sailing Team to attend this event in future.”

See full results and a complete line up of teams at www.wksc.net/wilson trophy

The 2013 Wilson Trophy is proud to have support from sponsors: DHL, Carlsberg, GJW Direct, MI Finance and Speed Medical.

ENDS

Georgie Corlett
Press Officer
The Wilson Trophy
Web: www.wksc.net/wilson trophy
Email: wilson.trophy.media@gmail.com