



Eurosaf University Match Racing Championships 2013

Nicholas Wilkinson, Philip Sparks, James Grant and Grace Fell, from the University of Bristol, represented BUSA at the European Sailing Federation (EUROSAF) University Match Racing Championship from 28th to 30th June 2013



The event was held on Lake Ledro, located very close to Riva del Garda. The team flew in and rented a car in order to drive to the lake, which is around two hours' drive from Milan.

Associazione Vela Lago di Ledro hosted the event, which was awarded ISAF grade 3 status. Sailing was in eight J22s, owned by the club for the past 10 years. They are very well maintained. The NoR specified a crew of four must be mixed, or a crew of three may be all male. All the entries adhered to the 350 kg weight limit and opted for four crew, including one woman. There were entries from 2 x Germany, Russia, France, Poland, Slovenia, 2 x Italy and the UK. Based on our ranking at the time, we were seeded 6th as a team. I was optimistic about our results as we had encountered the Slovenian team and one of the German teams in Nice last year and beaten both of them to earn 5th place at the University World Championships.



The host club was conveniently located close to our booked accommodation at the nearby campsite. It was a quick walk each morning to the briefing, beginning at 9:30, while the breeze filled. It did every day; we only needed to wait until the afternoon on one occasion.



The competition began slowly, with fickle winds cancelling three of our four races; thus we were the only team to have only completed one race after the first day. This gave us a little time to familiarise ourselves with the boats and get into a routine. We, unfortunately, lost our first race due to not being well drilled at this point. We won the pre-start, but lost the race up the first beat due to our sail set up. The following three races we began, but they were called off due to various wind conditions, which led the race to be overturned on occasions. One was a full 180-degree wind shift in which the boat behind rounded the "leeward mark" after dropping its kite and proceeded to hoist it and continue to sail over us downwind along what was previously the beat.



The second day saw much more favourable conditions in which we raced a full four races, plus two that were cancelled the previous day. Our team at this point was well drilled. With good input from all the team, consisting of three helms and one crew, we continued to win the pre-start controlling up the first beat. Our races were lost (4/8) due to downwind mistakes (x 2) and one unfortunate incident against the Italian team (who were placed third). In the latter, our jib cleat broke after the 25 minute warning signal had gone and, therefore, we had no right to redress. We won our races against the Polish, one of the Italian teams and the French comfortably.



Our races were lost predominantly due to our errors downwind in light shifty conditions. Often we would not pick the best gust downwind that allowed us to lose our races against the German team (Florian Haufe) who won this event, in which we were leading 3 out of 4 legs. Also in the race against the Slovenians, who were placed second in the event, they managed to sail under us from half a leg behind on the final downwind leg to, as Bruce Hebbert put it, “rob us of the win”.



This concluded our four losses that put us out of the top four and thus missing out on the semi-finals. We had one race in which we were, perhaps, lucky, where we were beating the Russian team until the final downwind leg, when they managed to roll us and gain room on the finish in which we did not give them sufficient room, but the umpires raised the wrong flag. So we managed to win this one, although, based on the umpire decision after the race, we should not have.



After ending up in 5th, in the round robin, we had a king-of-the-castle match for 5th – 9th place that we comfortably won against the French controlling from the prestart, justifying our place in 5th.



We learnt that we have a strong set of minds on board, and we managed to win each of our prestarts during the regatta. Our upwind speed and decision-making was good, but we lacked the downwind tactics. We need to develop this defensive manoeuvring downwind in the J22 that we have managed well in Elliot's so far. The wind conditions were tricky, and this is something else we can take away, as

a half a leg lead on the final leg often resulted in the race being overturned due to fantastically different wind conditions on the course.



To summarise, we made a few too many mistakes in the round robin to redeem ourselves in the semi-finals, but we were happy with our strengths and with what we took away from the event.

The event organisers, I believe, will do a fantastic job next year although the 8-boat, 4-match flights left a long waiting time between races and less time to deduce any possible breakages as the roll quickly into the next start.

The event was followed by two boat team racing to develop interest in the newly developing 2k team racing. We raced with the French against the two German teams and the two Italian teams in a mini round robin, which the Germans won.

Nicholas Wilkinson

Finals and daily reports to be found on the Eurosaf website:

http://www.eurosaf.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=235:european-university-mr&catid=15:all-news

Associazione Vela Lago di Ledro <http://www.avll.it>

Thanks to Giorgio Davanzo, PhD student at the University of Trieste, Jury and Umpire and sailing photographer supremo, we have access to many photos at:

<https://plus.google.com/photos/115688061335889486404/albums/5895622886442190961/5895623222921472194?banner=pwa&pid=5895623222921472194&oid=115688061335889486404>, for which use here is gratefully acknowledged.



