RYA Youth Match Racing 2013

12-13 October, 2013

Portland Harbour

Philip Bendon leads Mark Lees into a start of the Final   © Nigel Vick

Mark Lees takes it from Philip Bendon at the Youths

Without the Bristol Team who won last year (Nick Wilkinson, Phil Sparks & Sam Goodchild) there to defend their title, the way was clear for a duel between the teams of **Philip Bendon** & **Mark Lees**, 2nd and 3rd last year. This was given added edge, for them at any rate, by Philip's Team Ireland having recently taken the EUROSAF Match Racing Youth Championship title on Lake Constance, with Mark's Team GBR taking Silver ahead of fourteen other national teams.

Nigel Vick reports on the RYA Championship held over the weekend in Portland Harbour: '**Mark Lees' team** became the **2013 RYA Youth Match Racing Champions** at the end of an exciting final, which needed all five races and came right down to moves at the finish line before it was decided.

 'In fact, the whole event was tightly contested. At the end of the round robin stage the top and the bottom three teams were tied with the same number of wins. Tie breaks were applied, resulting in Semi finals of Tom Harrison against Mark Lees and Philip Bendon against Jason Saints, These were quickly completed with Mark and Philip, seeded no 1 & 2, going through to the final 2:0.

 'Meanwhile, there were mini round robins and knockouts to allow maximum sailing time for the remaining participants and to determine the lower places.

 'The Finals and 3rd/4th playoff were first to three ponts or best of five races. Jason Saints settled the 3/4 battle quickly with three straight wins over Tom Harrison. The final, though, was another matter entirely.

 'Mark Lees won the first match, in match 2 they were neck and neck at the windward mark when a luff by Philip Bendon earned him a penalty allowing Mark to go 2:0 up. However, match 3 went to Philip Bendon and Lees was penalised for pumping. Match 4 went to Philip, setting up a fifth deciding match.

Tarra Gill-Taylor (Exeter), Mark Lees (Team Echo), Matt Wallis (Cardiff)
Chris Tiernan (Solent), Phillip Bendon (Solent), Tommy Freeman (Southampton)
Jordan Saints (Southampton), Jason Saints (Exeter), Emily Nagel (Southampton)
© Nigel Vick

'A pre-start penalty put Bendon at a disadvantage. They split at the start with Lees going right and Bendon left. As they came together, half way up the first beat, Lees held a slight advantage. They exchanged tacks for the rest of the beat' but' at the mark' it was Lees rounding inside of Bendon. However, Bendon was quicker downwind and lead by a boat length at the leeward mark. He held the lead at the windward mark and down the final run, taking Lees out to the left of the committee boat, as he either had to complete his penalty or get a cancelling penalty on Lees. It was not to be, however. Lees stayed out of trouble and, as they slowly came past the committee boat, he was able to sneak behind Bendon and across the line to take the event and become RYA Youth Match Racing Champion 2013'.

Final order:
 1 Mark Lees (Team Echo), Tarra Gill-Taylor (Exeter), Matt Wallis (Cardiff)
 2 Phillip Bendon (Solent), Chris Tiernan (Solent), Tommy Freeman (Southampton)
 3 Jason Saints (Exeter), Jordan Saints (Southampton), Emily Nagel (Southampton)
 4 Tom Harrison, Jonty Cook & Will Goldsmith of Southampton
 5 Andrew Wishart, Joe Stansfield & Alex Frankling of Surrey
 6 Matt Deacon Smith, Cameron Ho & Eddie Romano of Cambridge
 7 Dan Stokes, Tom Piggott & Tom Cornthwaite of Loughborough
 8 James Cunnison, Matt Goodburn & James Dewing of Durham
 9 Nathan Howell, Henry Cross & Richard Stonehewer-Smith of Kings School

2013 Champions: Tarra Gill-Taylor, Mark Lees, Matt Wallis   © Nigel Vick