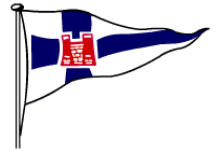




Lough Erne Yacht Club

Report - 35th Irish National J/24 Championship 29-31 August 2014



Over sixty sailors in a dozen J/24s competed in the 35th Irish National J/24 Championship hosted by Lough Erne YC on a lake in Northern Ireland near the Atlantic coast. Boats from all four coasts of Ireland and one from its centre, Lough Ree launched on Friday for two races, four on Saturday and two on Sunday. The Race Officer was Derek Bothwell, Howth YC, who did great work for Ireland's recent hosting of 2011 European and 2013 World J/24 Championships. Wife Gayle was Score Keeper.

The first four overall were all past Irish Champions, including Stefan Hyde, Royal Cork YC helming Jeremy Bear, Howth YC's youth team in Kilcullen, who won a race and local hero JP McCaldin, Jamais Encore, LEYC.

Fifth overall, one point behind Jamais and counting one race win was Tim Corcoran helming Martin O'Reilly's Crazyhorse from Sligo YC. This performance has greatly encouraged Ireland's latest J/24 fleet building at this Atlantic port on Ireland's north west coast.

Ireland's new 2014 National J/24 Champion, counting three races wins and five points ahead of Stefan Hyde, was Irish J/24 Association President, Flor O'Driscoll in Hard on Port with Naomi Elliott, Eoin O'Fearghail, Des Fortune and David Bailey. In eight years owning Crazyhorse, Flor has now been Irish National J/24 Champion three times and runner-up four times.

All eight races were tough tight contests among seasoned crews in strong gusty west and north winds, making this Lough Erne's best and biggest sailing sport event for some years. Courses started upwind, hard going, then dramatic down wind, spinnaker hoisted, bulged full of wind to drive boats surfing wildly on the waves.

The tightest tussle between crews, skills well -honed by the end of the season, was the contest for best inside positions rounding the leeward mark, dropping spinnaker, re-hoisting foresail, rounding then hardening onto the wind for the hard beat to windward - superb sport in the world's most popular racing keelboats, and great to see it yet again on Lough Erne where the fine sport of fleet racing under sail in 24 foot boats first began at 1822 regatta.

The other penalty was DNF in the third race where Jamais Encore's rudder broke. Ashore at lunch-break, a spare rudder fitted and back to the fleet, the Jamais team boldly won race five then race six for an Encore - enough to secure a fourth overall.



Steve Atkinson helming Bád (Irish for boat) from Carrickfergus SC also had a DNS, rudder fittings broken at the start of Saturday's last race. Repaired overnight, she competed on Sunday, but had missed Friday's races and so emerged tenth overall.

Sixth, from Lough Swilly, on the north coast was JGuevara, helm John Hassan. Lough Ree's Finbar Ryan and daughters in Jelignite made seventh. Eighth was Martin McNamara's Django, Royal Western YC, towed by road all the way from Clare up to the Erne.



LEYC's top helm John Patrick revels in hard winds. In Jamais Encore his scores included three firsts but also two penalties. One was for OCS, on course side, seconds early at the third start. Irish J/24 starts can be close packed with the experience of recent World and European J/24 Championships in Ireland.



About two dozen boats had raced in Ireland's Silver Anniversary Championship ten years ago. Half were old Westerly boats. Ten years later there were only three. Judie Anderson's Bandit helm Luke McBride, Lough Swilly YC, who won the Silver Fleet trophy, second Michael Clarke's Jeratrix, LEYC, third John Buckley's Jagged Edge Sligo YC.

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Many thanks to Peter Scott for the photographs**