

LOUGH ERNE YACHT CLUB

Volvo Champion Club Report, October 2009

The RYA Northern Ireland Volvo Youth championships in Larne on the 26 & 27 September saw no fewer than 80 boats compete across five RYA supported junior and youth dinghy classes. This RYA NI Volvo youth championships was one of nine zones and home county championships taking place throughout the UK that weekend, with some 1000 children all aged under 16 taking part in total.

The wind on Saturday was a steady 12-15 knots while on Sunday it was a different story 25 knots-plus greeted the young sailors. Racing was postponed for a couple of hours until conditions improved. It was worth the wait as the wind moderated to a steady 15 knots and the sun came out making it a splendid day of racing.

Sailing and securing a tightly contested second place was Fionnán Martin from LEYC in the Laser 4.7 rig. His race scores were very consistent 2, 4, 8, 2, 3 & 2.

In the Radial fleet of this Olympic class, with the top three Irish sailors and future Olympian hopefuls taking the first three places, LEYC sailor Ashraf Ghareeb did very well to achieving a creditable 9th position overall.

The Topper fleet was the largest with 51 boats including five LEYC sailors, Jennifer Whittaker, Christian Mulligan, Sara & Hanna Johnston, and Mark McCoy competing.

Jennifer Whittaker was 7th overall and her best races were a 3rd and 4th.

Mark McCoy's at his first event, as a new LEYC junior member, finished 43rd, Sara Johnston and Christian Mulligan finished 47th & 48th. Hannah Johnston retired on Sunday.

Pippa Wilson 2008 Olympic gold medallist was the special guest on Saturday; she was on the water on Saturday for the first day of racing to view the talented young sailors and picked LEYC's Mark McCoy for neatly crossing the fleet on the start line on a port tack. He won a voucher for £150 pounds from McCready Sailboats. Later on in the evening she was available for the young sailors to ask her questions.

The RYA NI Volvo youth championships traditionally mark the end of the Junior and youth racing season and the start of a hard winters training. They are a key event for any young sailor wishing to be selected for the RYA NI squads, which are the first step on the pathway to Olympic sailing.

This year, squad selection for the Lasers took place in Cushendall SC on the 10th and 11th of October (also LEYC Autumn Regatta). Three LEYC sailors secured places on the RYA (NI) Laser Youth Squad. Fionnain Martin and Jennifer are new to the squad while Ashraf Ghareeb is re-joining the Laser Squad for a second year. Ali Ghareeb did not go forward for selection this year as he is studying for A-levels.

The Topper selection for the younger junior's at Carrickfergus SC the same weekend did not prove as fruitful this time for LEYC's Topper sailors. They will need to prepare for the 2010 selections.

The RYA NI Junior and Youth squads provide a robust programme to develop young sailors in Northern Ireland with the aim of assisting progression to GBR or IRL National squads and developing racing skills of young people in NI. RYA NI secures funds from Sport Northern Ireland to continue to develop juniors in the best manner possible. Sailors will be able to access 6 weekends training and fitness evenings.

At RYA NI AGM, 13th October at Royal Ulster YC, presentations included one to LEYC's Jennifer Whittaker U16 winner of the Green Blue photography competition Evelyn Ghareeb, LEYC Youth Co-ordinator and Captain, Topper & Laser fleet