**Danske Bank Icebreaker Report - Feb 17th, 2019**

The weather gods smiled down on Ballyholme Yacht Club this weekend. Some say it was Charlie Westhurst brought the sun back from his skiing trip but whatever it was this was one of the best days sailing for many weeks. Warm (in fact very warm) temperature! Blistering sunshine, lovely 18-20knts southerly breeze and a good number of boats on the water made for an excellent day’s racing.

In fact the weather was that good we spotted a multihull on the start line. Admittedly it arrived for the wrong start time, but never the less good to see Matt and Andrew braving the elements. The fact they came out means they are leading the multi hull fleet after week 3.

In the large “dinghy” class (David Fletcher!!!)…. there were a few absentees. The strong breeze at the start of the race put a few people off going to sea. Those that did had an exhilarating sail. David Fletcher and Ryan Smith took first place in the Laser 2000 with Brian Bibby 2nd in his RS Aero. This puts Brian 2 points clear at the top of the leader board - well deserved as he has sailed really well in difficult conditions over these first 3 weeks.

In the topper fleet Izzy O’Farrell was the only one to make the start line and had a blast with the race course to herself. She did an excellent job negotiating her way round and with this her 3rd first place in a row pushes her 5 points clear at the top of the Topper fleet.

4 Laser Rigs competed on Sunday and Russel Finlay sailed well to get first place ahead of Emma Greer and Jacques Picton. Unfortunately, Joni had technical issues and had to retire with a broken mast. Hopefully she can get repaired during the week and we will see her back out next Sunday. Russel is now 2 points ahead of Joni in the overall positions so she can’t afford to lose a week. Emma is in 3rd place with Jess one further back.

In the laser class a good fleet enjoyed perfect racing conditions. Aidan, Paul Prentice and team set a good line encouraging the fleet to split between a pin end bias and the opportunity to hit the right hand side of the beat. Conor Simms and his dad John set the early pace with big Charlie Taylor close behind at the end of the first beat. To be fair it was not going to take Colin Leonard or Russell McGovern too long to make their way to the front, but they had to work hard to get past these guys. Charlie managed to stay in his boat the whole way around which helped his cause. Colin took the lead and was expecting the race to finish after the second lap but was dismayed to find he had another lap to go. Russel had him in his sights and by the end of the 3rd lap had taken the lead to take first place. Colin was a close second with Conor just slipping back towards the end taking 3rd.

The chasing pack were having tight racing - height and a bit of weight really paid off. I am not talking about Colm here……. But to be fair he was flying in the first two laps before a head gasket blew and he capsized at the North East mark. This let Mike Kimber, Chris Boyd and Adam Fermor get past him and this group were closing hard on the leading pack. Mike Kimber had an amazing last lap making up a huge amount of ground after a poor first lap.

In the Silver fleet Charlie Westhurst, energised after a week’s altitude training, stormed into first place utilising his extra strength and cardio fitness acquired on the slopes. Micky Forbes was a bit further back having completed 6 capsizes during his race.

John Pierce was first in the bronze fleet just ahead of Neil Cameron and James Moore. Ed and Ale must have taken their battle to the bar as neither appeared on the water.

Colin Leonard still leads from Chris Boyd and Conor Simms and Charlie Taylor.

Early start next week followed by the Ireland match against Italy. It would be good to get some of the absentees out next week…...