**Danske Bank Icebreaker Report 25/11/2018 – by Garth Maxwell**

Last week’s Danske Bank Icebreaker race lived up to its name. It was Baltic. It was also a bright day with strong winds which made it a great day for racing, but not the faint hearted. Because of the cold conditions and strong wind some competitors were slow to launch which meant the congestion on the slipway caused some boats to arrive slightly late for the start. Learnings for everyone there!!! The start was at the North West mark with the beat straight across the top of the bay to the North East mark. With this wind strength it was a challenge on the start line keeping clear of other boats and staying in our boat!!

The Laser 4.7s were away first and 4 boats ventured out. Great racing between them saw Ollie Haig take his second first place of this series, finishing just ahead of Lucas Nixon and Sarah Jennings and Abbie Brown. This leaves Lucas the lead by 2 points and Erin and Ellen just behind.

There were two multihulls out this week. Richard Swanston completed the course and claimed 1st place. Adrian Allen launched but was not able to complete the course. Unsure what misfortune became them. Adrain leads the series by 1 point from Swanny and Matt McMurtrie further back in 3rd and Pete McDowell in 4th.

Jenny Mullan and Claire Ritchie raced the Topaz in the small dingy class and came first…….. out of a fleet of one!!. Mind you it was an achievement to complete the course.

In the large dingy class a good fleet of 5 boats made the start. It was good to see Ruan O’Tiarnaigh back on the water although the rest of the fleet might not agree as he rocked into 1st place. Robin and Diane were second and Rob Milligan in 3rd. Brian Bibby and Sandra Halliwell just behind means that the leaderboard has Brian in 1st place, one point ahead Rob Milligan with Christina and Sandra in 3rd & 4th.

Jess Winton has provided the following report on the very competitive radial class - Thanks Jess.

"This week the Radial fleet was joined by Dan McGaughey, a sailor who has raced in Ballyholme a few times before. He came first by miles, even beating the majority of the full-rig fleet. Behind him came Joni Rock and Emma Greer, who had been ten points apart before discards, but are now only separated by two - first place isn’t guaranteed for anyone yet! 

The battle between Jess Winton and Colm McLarnon continues, and this time it was close - Colm started ahead but was caught in a disastrous mark rounding along with Jacques Picton, Emma Greer and a couple of others. This allowed Jess to overtake, but, like a complete muppet, she capsized at the end of the reach and couldn’t climb back up again. 

As winter weather picks up, heavy wind sailors are rubbing their hands together malevolently - the points may shift! 

In the Laser fleet the competition is really hotting up. The fleet saw the return of Bill O’Hara from overseas duty and former National champion Russell McGovern return to laser racing after a long spell away. For Russell it was just like he had never been away……. almost. He had a really strong race and finished second just behind Colin Leonard. Colin had a magnificent race relishing the strong winds and challenging conditions. His fitness and skill really shone through as he blasted past all boats in his road after a below par start. In fact at the end of the second lap he was able to stop to re-tie his main sheet which had worked itself lose. He continued on his way still in first place after this pit stop. John Simms had another fine race with a 3rd place to hold onto 2nd overall. He put Conor back in his box but to be fair Conor didn’t have his best start of the year but sailed very well to make up the places he did. He finally worked his way to 5th and pushing big Charlie Taylor all the way. Charlie loved the strong wind as well and finished in 4th in his new “13” boat!!! Keith Storey also sailed well in the heavy conditions to get 6th and move himself up the overall leader board.

There were a few incidents on the water during the race. As Jess has already stated, the radial fleet got itself tangled up at the green turning mark (Colm again in the middle of that!!) The Green mark was also the venue for another chaotic mark rounding as boats were hit with a freak gust of wind. Just as they were gybing round this mark boats capsized left right and centre. Richard Ramsey , Chris Boyd and a few others…. Cavan?? All had to swim a bit. This allowed a few people to seek past and claim so extra points.

However, Mark Mackie managed to get the “MUG OF THE DAY” award as he was the catalyst for another period of chaos for the fleet and like a domino effect managed to take 5 or six boats out of contention in their race. This was after he had also fallen foul of the black flag and had been disqualified before he even got started. Not a great day in the office. Some say "he should have gone to spec savers”!!!!!

Colin Leonard has now worked himself into a very strong lead in the series being 13 points clear of John Simms who is in 2nd only one point ahead of Chris Boyd. Conor Simms is in 4th with Charlie Taylor in 5th. Micky Forbes is having a fine series in the silver fleet and now leads that fleet. Ed Winton is leading the Bronze fleet.

The weather forecast gives strong winds for the next couple of weeks so the excitement is bound to continue (along with the mishaps!!!)