

Supernova Oxford Carriers Winter Championships

22nd February 2020

Race Report



Report by Gavin Young

The Supernova Class Winter Championships, sponsored by Oxford Carriers, took place on Saturday 22nd February 2020 at Bowmoor Sailing Club.

Following on the heels of Storm Ciara and Dennis, a few days ahead of the event the weather forecast did not look promising. Forecast winds of 40mph gusts started a big discussion of whether this would put off many sailors and concerns that sailing may not even be able to take place because of the 30mph maximum wind strength rule. The Committee made the wise decision to let the event go ahead and let the Race Officer make the call on the day based on the actual conditions.

On the day sailors were greeted by Bowmoor SC members, a club that really enjoys the visiting sailors and makes them feel so welcome with their fantastic facilities. The weather was surprisingly warm for the time of year but the wind was as expected with some gusts over 35mph. After a review of the weather and with a 20/25mph base wind the RO decided that race 1 would be started on time.

By the time of the pre-race briefing, 11 brave sailors, including the current National and Inland Champion Cliff Milliner (Cotswold), had signed on to compete. This was a significant reduction on the usual attendance as many felt the wind strengths were well above their abilities, and some sailors could not collect their boats from their local club due to localised flooding after the storms.

The RO set a short but challenging course with two big and difficult gybe marks.

Race 1 was started cleanly with 10 sailors making it to the starting area in challenging knock-down gusting conditions. Gavin Young led the race at the first windward mark having superior upwind speed off the line, followed by Milliner, Hollis and Biggs (both from Blithfield SC). The race turned into a real battle of boat handling skill, grit and determination with regular capsizes and more place changes than we have seen before as the sailors battled with the wind and each other. Eight of the ten starters managed to complete the first lap.

It is hard to recount all the place changes and capsizes, but a capsize by Young during the second lap allowed Biggs to take the lead until passed by Young upwind on the first leg of lap 3. Another big capsize by Young dropped him to 4th place with Milliner taking the lead. All was to change between the leeward mark and the next buoy following various capsizes and a wrong course taken by Milliner resulted in all 4 leading boats being within a boat length of each other with Young retaking the lead.

Lap 3 also saw Biggs take a big capsize at the leeward end of the course resulting in a retirement and a total of 6 boats still competing.

A total of 5 laps was completed in around 40 minutes of gruelling race conditions, with 6 finishers.

After 4 or maybe 5 big capsizes involving actual swimming Gavin Young took line honours with an impressive 2nd place from Cliff Milliner who only capsized once in the very challenging conditions, followed by Ben Hollis (Cotswold) in 3rd, Colin Anderson (Blithfield) 4th, Chris Hobbs (Bowmoor) 5th and Mark Hitchmough (Bowmoor) 6th in a Mark 1 boat.

After a small delay to assess the conditions and number of competitors, and with the wind and gusts building even higher the RO gave the warning signal for race 2. As the competitors sailed to the starting area a huge gust blew across the lake lifting a boat parked on the beach with the sail down

clean off the trolley and into the air flipping it in the air until it came down on the tip of its mast causing significant damage, at which point the RO abandoned the race and signalled all boats to return to the shore.

Some hot drinks and warm food were served for lunch. Many of the competitors had spent time in the water and needed warmth to stop the shivers. With a discussion between the race organising team and competitors, it was decided to abandon race 3 leaving the Winter Championship result to just one EPIC race.

The final results were as follows:

- 1st Gavin Young - 1192 - Cotswold SC
- 2nd Cliff Milliner - 1245 - Cotswold SC
- 3rd Ben Hollis - 1211 - Blithfield SC
- 4th Colin Anderson - 1036 - Blithfield SC
- 5th Chris Hobbs - 1179 - Bowmoor SC
- 6th and 1st Mark 1 Supernova Mark Hitchmough - 561 - Bowmoor SC



Oxford Carrier's Winter Championship winner Gavin Young receiving the trophy from Pete Bingham, Supernova Class Secretary

The Class and competitors would like to give a huge thank you to members of Bowmoor SC for supporting the event, the RO who managed to get a race completed, the safety boat crews who work overtime during the 40 minute race and the shore team who welcomed us, signed us on, fed us and provided the wonderful facilities that we enjoyed. Also, a huge thank you to the class members that turned up to sail, without you the event could not have been run. It was great meeting friends old and new. Look forward to seeing you at the next first 2020 Noble Marine Travellers' series event at Cotswold SC on the 14th March.