

2nd UK Access Championships

An eager band of sailors keen to show off their sailing skills gathered on the 19th and 20th August 2000 for the 2nd UK Access Dinghy National Championships held at Rutland Sailing Club. Some of the competitors had only been sailing for one year, yet won major prizes. One such sailor Simon Harle, won two awards which are particularly meaningful for anyone who knows him. Simon has Cerebral Palsy, on land he totally depends on other people, but in a boat away from the jetty, he says: "I'm my own man, I have control of what I want to do, where I want to go".

Twenty-one disabled sailors competed. The physical skills of the sailors were tested to the full, with a near force 5 wind on the Saturday, whilst in the almost non-existent wind on the Sunday the sailors had to rely on their technical tactical abilities. John Coombes did try to invent a new point of sail, the boom perpendicular to the mast, however this didn't create an advantage so he won't be trying it again. Advice: always check your sheet has a stopper knot.

303's

David Ayres of Advance Tapes Ltd presented the first Access 303 champions, Nadim Khawaja and Virginie Barreau from Surrey, with the trophy he had donated. David has a long association with sport for people with disabilities. David was instrumental in the introduction of Sport for People with Disabilities in the East Midlands, holding annual sports days at his firm almost thirty years ago. In the early 1990's he helped to set up the Special Olympics for people with learning difficulties in Leicester. He is very happy to be involved this year with disabled sailing, very impressed with the comradeship among the sailors, and particularly enjoyed the close finishes.

What a debut into racing Nadim and Virginie have made, having only been sailing for one year. Nadim was originally recruited to be his club's treasurer. He finds sailing "calming and peaceful, it takes all the stress out of life".

The second place trophy was won by Bryan Chettle and Bill Mitchell from Rutland Sailability. They believe competition isn't everything, it's about getting on the water and having fun ... and they certainly did. Third place was won by Robert Brown, the youngest competitor in the Nationals at the age of 11, and a complete novice sailor, with 'a little' advice from his crew, Ron Sawford.

2.3's

Ron Sawford, of the Access Dinghies Association, presented the remaining trophies. He was impressed with the tremendous effort the sailors had put into their sailing. "Access sailing is all about equality, about families and friends sailing together, regardless of age, ability or disability. With the Access dinghies, people can look forward and know that they will still be able to sail in their 90's."

Access 2.3 champion for the second year running was Eddie Pickering from Pitsford Sailing Club. During the races Eddie was giving good advice and encouragement to other sailors who were in close contest. He modestly admitted that he was always happy to improve anybody's sailing. Second place in the 2.3's went to Mike Shewen and third place to Mark Ellis, both from Rutland Sailability.

Other categories

Electronic Assisted Trophy and the Novice Trophy were won by Simon Harle from Rutland Sailability. Sailing with electronic assistance was difficult in Saturday's buffeting winds, but Simon thoroughly enjoyed his first experience of racing.

The Sight Impaired Trophy was won by Mark Ellis, also from Rutland Sailability for the second year running. Though totally blind he is able to sail solo with a "buddy" to act as his eyes, guiding him round the course using a voice activated two-way radio.

The Endeavour Trophy was won by Clive Aldridge from Carsington in Derbyshire, for his sterling performance and improvement during the weekend.

The weekend ended as Eddie Pickering spoke for everybody to say that they had had fantastic fun throughout. It couldn't have happened without the great infrastructure. Bottles of wine were presented to those whose organisation, both on the water and on shore, had made the weekend possible.

A thoroughly successful 2nd UK Championships!

2nd Access Dinghy National Championships Results 19th and 20th August 2000

Boat No	Competitor	Club	Position
Access 2.3			
206	Eddie Pickering	Northampton	1st
166	Mike Shewen	Rutland	2nd
159	Mark Ellis	Rutland	3rd
366	George Dutton	Carsington	4th
290	John Aldridge	Woolverstone	5th
318	Ken Butterfield	Carsington	6th
161	John Coombes	Rutland	7th
162	Val Milward	Rutland	8th
370	Mary Spacey	Northampton	9th
317	Kevin McCarthy	Carsington	= 10th
158	Geoff Gibbons	Rutland	=10th
289	Clive Aldridge	Woolverstone	12th
Access 303			
	Nadim Khawaja Virginie Barreau	Tideway	1st
219	Brian Chettle Bill Mitchell	Rutland	2nd
333	Robert Brown Ron Sawford	Rutland	3rd
Visually Impaired			
162	Mark Ellis	Rutland	1st
Access 2.3 Servo Assist			
	Simon Harle	Rutland	1st