

East Zone Championships



With not a cloud in the azure sky, boats, competitors, officials and parents waited patiently for the breeze to arrive!

West Mersea clubs Dabchicks SC and West Mersea YC joined forces to stage this year's East of England Co-operative Volvo RYA East Zone Championships. Despite being bedevilled by fluky light breezes from almost all points of compass, the 150 young sailors enjoyed themselves.

Added bonus was attendance on the first day of Olympic gold medallist Paul Goodison, along with local Olympian Saskia Clark, to give the proceedings a boost.

Two and half 12-kilo boxes of Fair Trade bananas and 50 blocks of chocolate were handed out among the 150 competitors at this year's RYA East Zone Youth Championship held at West Mersea over the weekend. Providers of this much sort after bounty were local sponsors East of England Co-operative Society.

On the first day of the event, national sponsor Volvo Sailing arranged for Olympic gold medallist Paul Goodison along with local Olympian Saskia Clark to spend the day on the water with the fleets and in the evening to entertain them with tales of the exploits in China.

This is the second time the East of England Co-operative Society has added its name to that of main national sponsors Volvo for this event.

The weekend was marked by wall-to-wall summer sunshine and little or no wind. With a mere five knot sea breeze they got two races in on Saturday and for some classes, one on Sunday. Whether the youngsters got a race or not almost depended on which piece of water their course was laid.



Young competitors gather for the prize giving.

In the case of the Oppies on Sunday they rarely had more than fitful three knot whisper and so their chance to race eventually died away with an ever-quickenning Spring ebb threatening to take them out to sea.



Light airs made starting difficult for the Toppers, seen here jostling for water at the windward end of the line.

The Toppers, Cadets and Handicap fleets were slightly further out in the estuary and had a five knots flukey breeze and so got in one race on the Sunday.

The combined SE and E Zones windsurf fleet, sailing off the Seaview beach further round on the East coast of the island had the best of the weather and sufficient breeze to complete a seven-race series with three sailors claiming seven awesome straight wins.

Thomas Addison (Hythe and Saltwood SC) romped to 7.8 success with his clean sweep while Dani Conroy (Hythe, Kent) and Zara Petts (Folkstone) achieved the same on the 5.5 and the 3.5 respectively. Two race wins and a fourth from her three races on Sunday saw Hattie White (Sudbury) take the 6.8 title while Henry Bloodworth (Tadworth) tied up 4.5

victory with two firsts and a second.

With all dinghies bar the Optimists adding one more race to their overnight scores, George Meredith (Brancaster Staithe SC) wrapped up the Topper title with victory over James Rushton (Salhouse). Felixstowe brothers John and Alexander Page won the Cadets from Corinthian Otters duo Katie Barr and Arthur Brown.



George Meredith (Brancaster Staithe SC) receives the East Region Youth Champion Trophy from RYA East Vice-Chairman Fiona Wylie. George also won the Topper class.

With no further racing in the fleet on Sunday, Dabchicks' Harry Gozzett won the Optimists with Jake Braybrook (Burnham on Crouch) second and Joe Girling (Norwich) third. Josh Girling (Colchester) won the Fast Handicap fleet on a Laser and Matthew French (Colchester) the Slow Handicap on a Tera Pro.

With the Topper. Handicap and Cadet fleets completing their race a halt was called in the face of a dying breeze and a stiff ebb tide. The fleets were gathered up and towed back to the beach at West Mersea by the rescue and support boats (even the Press boat brought a number of Toppers ashore).

The East of England Co-op Volvo RYA East Zone Championships was one of eight RYA Zone and Home Country Championships taking place across the UK on 27–28 September, with more than 1,000 youngsters competing

in eight RYA-supported junior classes throughout the country.

The annual RYA Zone and Home Country Championships are considered a key event for young sailors wishing to be selected for the RYA Zone and Home Country squads, which are the first step on the pathway to Olympic Classes sailing.

Thanks to sponsors and organisers alike for trouble-free and enjoyable event. East of England Co-op will be back as regional sponsor next year – watch this space!



Their one race on Sunday over, and the breeze fitfully failing the fleets were towed back to base by the support boats. Here some of the Topper sailors get a relaxed ride back courtesy of RYA East Zone High Performance Manager Paul Wren.

Full result tables, points and positions can found at:

<http://www.sailracer.co.uk/events/eventresults.asp?id=3&t=et&eventid=7153>