

Dart 18 Worlds were a Blast!

Seven Marconi boats travelled to the Dart 18 World Championships hosted at Bridlington in early August. The opportunity to compete in a fleet of 140 boats in UK waters was too good to miss! The Dart 18 fleet consists of some extremely talented sailors so it was a great opportunity to sail with them and learn from the experts.

The event was superbly organised by the Royal Yorkshire Yacht Club at Bridlington and based from their beautiful sandy beach. A full range of social activities were laid on every day in addition to a schedule of ten races over five days, preceded by practice racing on the Saturday.

The weather did its best to ruin things with cool temperatures, strong winds and a day of driving rain thereby re-enforcing the stereotypical English summer to our European guests!

The practice race took place in breezy conditions on the Saturday afternoon - plenty of capsizes and some boat damage but the Marconi fleet were all unscathed. Strong winds cancelled racing on the Sunday - so three races were held on Monday afternoon to try and "catch back" the schedule. The racing format is upwind/downwind about a mile to mile and half long, with three laps and races due to last between 70 and 100 minutes. There was a single start line with Committee Boats at each end and one in the middle. All very different to club racing Conditions on Monday varied from very breezy to medium and after six hours on the water, the fleet returned to shore having completed all three races.

In the evening, team Marconi and all their support crew enjoyed an excellent dinner at the South Cliffe Hotel who were somewhat surprised but pleased to get a table booking for twenty two people on a Monday evening and the food was superb.



Tuesday brought medium winds for the start of the first race, with the wind falling away and the race being shortened at the windward mark on the third lap. A young crew on one of the Bridlington boats was observed fast asleep on the tramp on the final upwind leg! The wind did a 180 degree shift and did not settle again, so racing was finished for the day. Whilst the weather was not good for the sailors, it was about the only day where our support crew could actually sit on the beach in reasonably enjoyable conditions!



Wednesday was originally due to be a "lay day" but it was planned to sail after all to regain some of the lost races. However, the weather had other ideas with strong onshore winds making the sea state unsafe for racing. It turned out to be a wise decision with the wind blowing 35 knots during the afternoon complete with driving rain. Cue the fleet having to move all the boats up on to the sand-dunes clear of the incoming tide and take down the masts to protect the boats - all whilst getting soaked! Fortunately, team Marconi can still find a way to have a laugh even in times like those.



Thursday dawned breezy but dry and the fleet were itching to get sailing. However, there was still a high sea state and having battled to get through the surf off the beach, the fleet were then faced with two metre waves and 20plus knot winds. Whilst hanging on grimly to stay attached to the boat, the competitors spared a thought for those on the committee boats bouncing around in those conditions and also to all the single handed sailors - including Marconi's Jon Pearce. There were a few capsizes among the Marconi fleet but fortunately the Marconi boats were largely unscathed and all the crew were safe. Plenty of other boats sustained damage and dismastings so we were fortunate. Jason and Jenny did well in the conditions and even managed to lead the whole fleet for a lap of race one, finishing sixth by the end. Meanwhile, Rob and Scarlett did a great job of getting the photographer to take pictures of them and Nigel and Karen managed to bend their mast into an interesting banana shape.





The fleet had reduced by half for the start of race 2 which also took place in strong winds although the sea state finally started to ease off by the end of lap three. A punishing four hours on the water and the help from the Marconi support crew on the beach to recover the boats was very gratefully received. The donuts were particularly welcome.

Friday had medium to strong winds but a mercifully flatter sea state so all the Marconi boats were back out to fight another day. Unsurprisingly with 140 boats, the starts were not straightforward and there were General Recalls and Black Flags to contend with for both races. Jason and Jenny again seemed to relish the strong breezes and had another great race result with fifth place. Conditions were still challenging enough to result in more boat damage and retirements but all Marconi boats completed both races in one piece. Another gruelling four hours on the water but the shore crew did a great job of getting everything set up so the sailors could quickly pack down the boats and get them onto the trailers which is always the least fun part of any regatta. And there were more donuts!



The prizegiving was held promptly (after the daily protest committees had taken place). The World Champions were Vincent Bouvier and Fanny Merelle from France which hopefully made up for the weather we inflicted on them. Second place went to Grant Piggott who many at Marconi will know and his grand-daughter Ellamay aged 11 – just one of many young crews who did fantastically well particularly given the conditions. The UK Nationals results were extracted from the overall results which makes Grant and Ellamay the UK National Champions - a very well deserved title. Jason and Jenny were also delighted to be presented with the highest placed first time Nationals trophy – placing 12th out of the 99 UK entries and 18th overall.



Whilst the weather was brutal at times, it was a great regatta and the sailors all learnt lots about sailing the Dart 18 and competing in a large fleet. Hats off to Royal Yorkshire Yacht Club and their team of volunteers who worked so hard to pull off a fantastic event on such a big scale. We are also extremely grateful to the wonderful Marconi support crew that thought they were going to spend a week sunbathing on a beautiful beach but instead battled wind and rain and walked hundreds of miles pushing trolleys, boats and weary sailors up and down the beach. So extra thanks to:

Stuart and Rosie Snell, Caroline, Dennis, Caitlin and Matthew Tibbs, Carolyn Clay, Dave and Clare Clarke, Adrienne and Eloise Clarke, Elaine, Freya and John Cobb, Martin Pickering and Pat Barnett, Dave Russell and Harrison "Media Content" Myles.

Marconi Worlds and Nationals Rankings:

18th & 12th – Jason Clarke and Jenny Ball
64th & 48th – Jon Pearse – completed all 8 races and no capsizes – single handed!!
85th & 63rd – Rob Clay and Scarlett Cobb
95th & 72nd – Andy and Emma Perks
98th & 74th – Nigel James and Karen Corley
110th & 82nd – Christophe and Amelie Clarke
118th & 88th – Peter Richardson and Kyle Tibbs

Full Worlds Results are here: <https://events.clubsupport.uk/results/2023/dart18worlds23.htm>

Full Nationals Results are here: <https://events.clubsupport.uk/results/2023/dart18nationals23.htm>

