

Solo Fleet Review – March 2008

The 2008 season has started in much the same vein as the old season ended, with dwindling numbers and such extremes of weather that competitors were either drifting on the tide or sitting out the abandoned race in the bar, watching the gale force winds whipping up the estuary.

Chris Cleaves as usual kept the fleet to the forefront in the handicap series winning both the Winter Series and the Festive Series. In the latter, eight out of the first ten places were taken by Solos. The New season got under way on 8th March with the Commissioning race, in which Solos again took line honours and the first two places in the results, but this time Cleaves had to give second best to Paul Ellis who had been putting in some practice. Since then, the weather in the Spring Series has been a bit of a disappointment. In the first race with a strong tide and virtually no wind, while many abandoned all hope and headed for the an early retirement, Chris Cleaves crossed the line over a quarter of an hour before Peter Cook's Yawl and over half an hour in front of Dan Bridger's second placed Solo. The following two races have had to be abandoned due to the gale force winds.

Mention must be made of Salcombe's representation at this year's Starcross Steamer on 2nd March. Five crews made the trip with the Solos acquitting themselves well, particularly Peter Hammond who finished in fourth place, with Paul Ellis & Dave Greening placed 10th & 12th respectively. Simon & Peter Ballantyne finished 46th in their National Twelve just a few places ahead of Dan & Harry Bridger who gave some of Torbay's serious Tasar sailors a good run for their money in Salcombe's only and rather tired example.

Off the water, the fleet turned out in large numbers for a very informative evening training talk given by Chris Cleaves. The presentation covered all aspects of race preparation, from boat tuning to exercise and diet. It was interesting to note that the doctrine of 'practicing what you preach' is as abused in this field, as it is in many others.

This summer we will lose Toby Spittle for six weeks as he has been chosen as one of 50 to take part in a Polar expedition. At the end of Chubby's training session, a surprised Toby was presented with a cheque for £375 sponsorship raised from members of the fleet. Toby has been booked by the social committee to present a talk of his experience to the Club on 26th September.

The outlook for the forthcoming season looks good, the fleet now numbers 28 and there are still more talking of buying Solos. The national championships are being hosted by the Royal Torbay Yacht Club this year on 19th -25th July and there will be some strong entries from Salcombe. Meanwhile, we wish John Brockwell a speedy recovery from his recent knee surgery and likewise look forward to seeing Julian Meek back on the water when his hernia problems are resolved.