

GP14 CHAMPIONSHIPS OF IRELAND

29th/30th/31st August 2014 - Newtownards Sailing Club

McCarthy & Bracken Dominate GP14 National Championships

Shane McCarthy and Damien Bracken have won the GP14 Championships of Ireland with a dominant display of top class sailing in tricky conditions at Newtownards Sailing Club.

Five races were completed over three days on the northern end of Strangford Lough.

The 37 boat fleet was made up of sailors from clubs throughout the country, including Youghal, Dun Laoghaire, Sligo, Derry, Sutton, Greystones, Skerries, Mullingar and the home club of Newtownards.

There was a large youth attendance mainly from Sutton Dinghy Club, they sailed hard and partied hard long into the night. The fleet also included two boats that travelled from the UK, the International Class President Duncan Greenhalgh & Sam Watson who finished 2nd at the GP14 Worlds in 2014.

Race 1 on Saturday started in an 8-10 knot westerly breeze. McCarthy and Bracken led around the first windward mark and were never in danger from the chasing pack. There was a lot of place changes on the second and third beats due to some large shifts and variations in wind strength. At the finish it was McCarthy & Bracken from Niall Henry & Ossian Geraghty who were closely followed by Alan Blay & David Johnson.

Race 2 was sailed in bit more breeze which had shifted round to the southwest, again it was McCarthy and Bracken showing the way at the first windward mark closely followed by Dan & Hugh Gill, Sam Watson & Nick Deveraux. As the race progressed it was Henry & Geraghty who pulled through to 2nd with the fast charging Ger Owens and Mel Morris finishing in 3rd place.

The silver and bronze fleet competition was fierce, leading the silver fleet at the end of day 1 was Dan Gill and bronze fleet leader was young Peter Boyle crewed by his dad, Stephen.

There were three races scheduled for Sunday but the forecast was for little wind. The fleet stayed ashore until 1pm, a light breeze brought the fleet to the starting area but it was short lived and the PRO abandoned for the day shortly after.

Day 3 was to start at 10am in order to get a further three races in before the 14:30 deadline, a light offshore breeze of 8 to 12 knots with shifts of up to 20 degrees was the order of the day.

Pent up energy from Sunday resulted in a number of general recalls and the use of the black flag was required to keep the fleet in order.

Race 3 was again dominated by Championship leaders McCarthy and Bracken who took the gun from the returning Mark Taylor and crew Amanda Crosswaithe, Ger Owens and Mel Morris took 3rd place.

Mark Taylor's 2nd place moved him to the top of the leader board of the Bronze fleet while the Silver fleet leader was now Steven & Jonny Nelson.

Unknown to the competitors, race 4 was being filmed by a drone operated from one of the safety boats. The video footage can be viewed on <https://vimeo.com/137921455>. The story of this race was that McCarthy and Bracken were not at the front, the front runners were Dan O'Connell crewed by Laura McFarland and Ger Owens & Mel Morris. Dan and Ger managed to put baby talk aside for a while and swapped places a number of times during the race. In the end though, Dan & Laura hit the last leeward mark allowing Ger & Mel to sail away to victory, Tim Corcoran & Brendan Brogan took 2nd with McCarthy and Bracken 3rd.

With time remaining for only one more race, Shane and Damien were crowned National Champions. It is believed that history was made on two fronts, Shane becomes the first Irish helm to hold the title of Irish and British GP14 Champion in the same year, a remarkable achievement. Not to be out done, Damien becomes the first Irish sailor to win the GP14 Championship of Ireland as both helm and crew. Word has it that next year, they will reverse roles with Damien on the helm and Shane in the front?

Race 5 would determine the winner of the Silver and Bronze fleets, Dan & Hugh Gill needed to see off the challenge of Steven & Jonny Nelson to secure the win, they sailed an excellent race to finish 5th , which left them 7th overall and Silver fleet Champions.

The Bronze fleet was between Adrian Lee & Edward Coyne and Mark Taylor & Amanda Crosswaithe, Mark and Amanda sailed another good race to claim the title of Bronze fleet Champions.

The battle for 2nd and 3rd in the Gold fleet was between Owens, Henry and Corcoran. A 4th place finish in the last race for Ger & Mel secured 2nd overall while a 2nd place for Tim & Brendan gave them 3rd overall.

The top youths were Sam Watson and Nick Deveraux who finished just ahead of Dan & Hugh Gill.

A big thank you from all the competitors to Newtownards Sailing Club for hosting the event and putting on a great event both on shore and on the water.

Gold Fleet

- 1st Shane McCarthy & Damien Bracken
- 2nd Ger Owens & Mel Morris
- 3rd Tim Corcoran & Brendan Brogan

Silver Fleet

- 1st Dan & Hugh Gill

2nd Steven & Jonny Nelson

3rd Gareth & Richard Gallagher

Bronze Fleet

1st Mark Taylor & Amanda Crosswaithe

2nd Adrian Lee & Edward Coyne

3rd Conor Twohig & Sinead Dickson