

SONATA INLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS
CONISTON SAILING CLUB
OCTOBER 2002

Typical Coniston fluky winds started the first day of the Inlands at Coniston in October this year. It was bitterly cold but the sun shone for most of the time during the 2 races, with one icy shower soaking the competitors at the end of race 1. Nick Kirk of N-D-K watersports photography took advantage of the sunshine to take some amazing photographs, which can be seen on the Sonata website.

Nigel Harries and his crew in Moonlight led the way in the first race with Tom White in Pizzicato leading for the first lap of race 2. However, the end of day one saw Moonlight with 2 firsts, with Neil McClure in So and Martin Hartley in A Sharp Exit taking a second place each.

Day 2 started bright and early with 3 races to fit in, the first 2 back to back and then a quick comfort break and food stop between race 2 and 3. The winds continued to be mainly easterly and variable, although the gusts did increase in strength throughout the day. Weed proved one of the biggest challenges during Sunday with both So and Dark n' Stormy collecting large clumps on their keel giving them both a last place in 2 of the races. So led briefly for the first lap in race 1, as did Judy Leese in Footnote in race 2 but the day was Moonlights once again with 3 firsts.

The pattern remained very much the same on the second weekend with Moonlight dominating the fleet from start to finish in both of the races on the Saturday, ending the day with an impressive 7 straight wins. The battle for second and third places raged between Pizzicato, Dark N Stormy and So during race 6 with A Sharp Exit and Footnote joining them in race 7. Sadly, Dark N Stormy retired in race 7 with broken gear and So was disqualified from Saturdays 2 races for ignoring the instruction to wear lifejackets. This left Dark N Stormy and A Sharp Exit with a 2nd place each on Saturday. The winds increased in strength during the afternoon with a fairly steady Southerly for most of the time. Once again the rain held off to give some very enjoyable racing.

On the Saturday evening the championship dinner was held at the Waterhead Hotel in Coniston with 66 people enjoying a 4-course meal, a few drinks and lots of opportunities to swap stories of the day.

The final Sunday brought the promised strong winds for the long distance race. After much deliberation the race officers decided to start the race, and 6 boats braved the conditions - Pizzicato, A Sharp Exit, Dark N Stormy, Footnote, Flashpoint and Sting. Steve Goacher's advice to only reef a Sonata when it was

blowing the dogs of the jetty was taken by all - it was only later that we realised there weren't actually any dogs about (had they blown off without us noticing or were they all curled up in front of a nice warm fire!) and that a reef could have been a good idea. Sting retired soon after the start but the other 5 boats made it to the weather mark with 2 of the boats getting round the gybe mark at the end of the next leg before the race committee decided to abandon the race.

The event ended with Nigel Harries in Moonlight a clear winner, Martin Hartley in A Sharp Exit in 2nd place and Tom White in Pizzicato 3rd. Tony Johnson, helming Dark N Stormy in 4th place won the best Coniston boat prize and Judy Leese in Footnote, in 5th place won the lady helm, with Pay Off from Windermere winning a trophy for best visiting boat outside the top 3. Tom White also picked up the award for furthest travelled.

The event was very well run with Committee boat starts and finishes for every race - thanks must go to race officer, Keith Coxon, and his assistants Dave Fletcher, Martin Ashall and Valerie Beacock for the professional way all the races were held. Thanks also to the fleet of volunteers who manned the safety boats over the 4 days, ferrying people to and from their boats, acting as path finder and generally standing by to assist if needed - it looked touch and go before Sunday's start when Footnote was pinned down by a down draft for about 5 minutes - but apparently the keel is in good condition!

Refreshments were provided throughout the whole event both in the kitchen and in the bar and this was all well appreciated and thanks were given to the many people who served in both these areas.

Coniston Sailing Club is well known for running well-organised large multi-fleet dinghy regattas but this is the first time such an event has been held for cruisers. Indeed it is quite a few years since any one-design regattas have been held. I may be biased but I believe it was a very well run event with all competitors and spectators enjoying the event. Thanks to the 6 visiting boats for coming to Coniston and we hope to see you again some time.

Judy Leese
Footnote