

**Sonata Inland
Championships 2007**
10th–11th November; Lake
District Boat Club, Windermere
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Gallery by Malcolm Pratt

On 10 November 2007 twelve Sonatas gathered on Windermere for their Inlands regatta. With limited daylight hours and a need to both launch and recover many of the boats within the weekend, a tight schedule was devised with four races on the Saturday and three on the Sunday. Winds were predicted to be strong from the north west and the Met. Office did not disappoint, with Saturday's early rain clouds blown clear of the course by the start of the first race at 11.15am.

The course set was a windward-leeward, with a gate at the downwind end, and a dramatic start to the first race saw two boats having to perform 720° turns, immediately after crossing the line. One of those making turns was Steve Goacher's "Eric The Boat", which was left at the back of the fleet as they headed up the first windward leg. Three laps later, "Eric The Boat" had clawed back to third place, but Steve and his crew could not catch local boys Nigel, Gavin and Graham Tullett, sailing with Harold Lefton, who were first across the line on "Point Five", just ahead of Martin Price and his crew on "High and Dry".

The second race also had a dramatic start with "Eric The Boat" pushed over the line ahead of the gun. Responding to the recall flag and returning to re-cross the line, Steve Goacher and his crew once again found themselves at the back of the fleet, but this time they demonstrated why "Eric the Boat's" crew are National Champions, by cutting through the fleet and taking first place at the line, followed by Martin Price and his crew on "High and Dry", with Paul Harkness helming "#Sharp" in to third position.

Following a brief lunch on the water, the start line was repositioned, to accommodate a more northerly wind and race three commenced with a pinpoint accurate start by "Eric the Boat", hitting the line at speed, barely a fraction of a second after the start signal. Once again "Eric the Boat" was first home. Again "High and Dry" took second place and this time it was "Point Five" in third.

By the time the fourth race started, the wind had taken its toll on some of the crews, and with minor injuries, pulled muscles and bruises on several boats, the veteran Trevor Roberts withdrew "Spin Off" and headed for shelter. With an eye on the wet weather sweeping in over the mountains and with dusk approaching, the race Officers elected to shorten the course to just one and a half laps, much to the relief of the remaining crews, many of whom were wishing they had fitted their nav lights. First home was "Eric the Boat", second was "Point Five" and Martin Hartley took third place on "A Sharp Exit". A disappointing sixth place finish, by the otherwise consistent "High and Dry" left everything to play for on the following day. A very enjoyable evening at the Lake District Boat Club, serenaded by the six piece band "Billy and the Tempramentals" ended an exhausting day and by 1.00am the band were still playing, but the sailors had gone to bed.

Day 2

With a 10.30am start on the Sunday, in moderate winds, the boats followed a triangular course around the lake racing marks, giving a change from the windward leeward courses of the previous day. This race was slightly longer than the previous day's races and by the third lap the boats had spread, giving the race officer an easy task to record the finishing positions. First, once again, was "Eric the Boat". "High and Dry" saw a return to form with a comfortable 2nd place and Alan Harper on "Pied Piper" took a very respectable third place.

The second race on Sunday returned to a windward leeward course, but this time without a gate. The race officer had intended this two-mark, race to be a short sprint of only two laps, but the Windermere wind gods were having none of it. As the five minute warning

sounded, the wind dropped to nothing and the boats were becalmed, stationary, yards from the start line. The four minute warning came and went and nobody moved. At the one minute signal, the race control rib at the far end of the line reported on the radio "Eric the Boat is going backwards" and as the flag came down for the start, no one crossed the line.

In the distance a small ripple appeared on the water and began to creep diagonally towards the fleet, from the north west. Soon it was a big black line, then a black mass, indicating a strong wind. The wind hit "Eric the Boat" at the pin end of the start line, but did not proceed further down the line. All the other competitors then had to sit, becalmed, and watch "Eric the Boat" accelerate off into the distance. With two discards to play with and four races already won by "Eric the Boat", this gift from the wind gods hardly seemed fair on the rest of the fleet. Eventually the wind filled in across the rest of the line and slowly one by one the rest of the fleet set off in pursuit. Except, that is, for two boats "Pied Piper" and "A Sharp Exit", which remained steadfastly becalmed adjacent to the race control boat. The Windermere winds had not yet finished their game. With most of the fleet now reaching north-west, the wind at the start line filled in from the south-east sending the crew of "A Sharp Exit" scrabbling for their spinnaker. Fortunately, they did not launch the kite, because five seconds later the wind had again switched 180 degrees and they crossed the line on a beat, heading north east. With the last two boats across the line, heading north east, and the rest of the fleet a considerable distance away, to the north west, all seemed lost for "A Sharp Exit", but more dramatic wind shifts then left some boats becalmed to the west, whilst a narrow band of wind down the east side lifted "A Sharp Exit" back into contention. Blessed by the wind gods, "Eric the Boat" arrived home a country mile ahead of the fleet and with five wins in the bag and no need to sail the last race, the crew sailed off towards shore with a cheery wave to the race officers. Second back was Point Five, and Trevor Roberts brought "Spin Off" home in third. A one, two and three to the local crews, familiar with the vagaries of the Windermere wind. Miraculously, after a disastrous start "A Sharp Exit" finished fourth, proving once again that, on Windermere, one should never give up, no matter how hopeless the situation seems.

The last race of the series was down to ten boats with Kevin Hendry on "Sonic" having retired to the shore. This time the winds stayed steady and a good start by all boats gave a fine windward-leeward race in biting cold, but sunny weather. "Point Five" took the bullet, with "Pied Piper" in second and Neil McClure's "So" in third place. Overall, the Inlands trophy was awarded to Steve Goacher on "Eric The Boat", second was Harold Lefton's "Point Five" with Martin Price and "High and Dry" taking third place.

Boat Name	Sail Number	Helm	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	Points	Position
ERIC THE BOAT	8748	Steve Goacher	3	1	1	1	1	1	13	5	1
POINT FIVE	8362	Harold Lefton	1	5	3	2	5	2	1	9	2
HIGH AND DRY	8285	Martin Price	2	2	2	6	2	6	5	13	3
PIED PIPER	8320	Alan Harper	4	7	6	5	3	5	2	19	4
SO	8217	Neil McClure	5	4	5	4	4	8	3	20	5
A SHARP EXIT	8249	Martin Hartley	6	6	4	3	7	4	6	23	6
# SHARP	8504	Paul Harkness	10	3	11	8	6	7	4	28	7
SPIN OFF	8039	Trevor Roberts	9	8	8	13	8	3	8	35	8
SONIC	8084	Kevin Henry	7	9	7	7	11	10	13	40	9
SARABAND	8314	Mark Taylor	8	10	10	9	9	9	7	42	10
DARK AND STORMY	8718	Philip Johnstone	11	11	9	10	10	12	9	50	11

OUT OF THE BLUE	8171	Michael Low	12	12	12	12	12	11	10	57	12
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