

Catapult Nationals at Bala Sailing Club

Gareth Ede may have won all six races to retain his National Championship title, but it was far from a walk in the park as he had to fight off challenges from John Terry and Paul Ellis.



The fleet's away! © John Hunter

Eight Catapults assembled at Bala Sailing Club to contest the championships which formed part of the Club's Multihull Open. Alas, one had to drop out from the outset with gear failure. And Chris Upton had to retire hurt from Race 3 and sit out the second day's racing with a badly gashed arm sustained in a gybe, but not before notching up a first on handicap in Race 2.

All the races except the last were sailed over a course that comprised a beat up the lake, two reaches across the lake followed by a run and a short beat to the finishing line.

Race 1

There was a worrying lack of wind as the fleet trickled down the lake to the starting area. The start was postponed for a short time while the race team waited for the breeze to fill in. A shift just before the start tempted Stuart Ede to immediately tack onto port and head up the right side of the beat. However he watched in horror as the rest of the fleet, which had gone left, found a narrow band of stronger breeze on the other side of the lake and were speeding towards the windward mark.

Gareth was first to the windward mark followed by John Terry, Paul Ellis and Chris Phillips. On the next lap Gareth and John increased their lead over Paul and Chris P. The leading pair were never more than a few boat lengths apart, and this is reflected in the finishing times with Gareth just 12 seconds ahead of John. Paul came in another half minute behind.

Race 2

By now the breeze had piped up to a force 3 to 4 with sustained gusts of Force 5 measured at the Committee Boat, which made for some exciting reaches, and had Gareth regretting leaving his trapeze harness ashore. However, it did not stop him being first to the windward mark again. Rob Sloggett, who is relatively new to the fleet, was third to round close behind Paul in second.

Downwind John overtook Rob and set off in pursuit of Paul. Over the next lap and a half John and Paul battled for second place with several changes of place. Meanwhile Gareth increased his lead to finish more than two minutes ahead. John took second place from Paul by just 10 seconds.



Gareth chases down Paul on the first run of Race 5 © John Hunter

Race 3

The fleet headed for the left shore of the lake before tacking for the windward mark. John rounded first with Gareth close behind. Next came Chris P and Stuart. Gareth drew level with John as they set off for the run. As leeward boat, John took Gareth well above the rhumb line, which allowed Chris and Stuart to catch up. So the four of them were in close company as they rounded the bottom mark with Stuart in third place. However, on the next beat Gareth climbed away to establish a 90 second lead over John who in turn had a 30 second lead over Chris P and Stuart. Chris P beat Stuart to the windward mark, but Stuart was on Chris's tail as they approached the bottom mark for the last time. He gybed early and tried to grab the inside track at the mark. However, it didn't come off and he had to settle for fourth.

Race 4

Day 2 dawned windless, but after a half hour postponement there was enough breeze to start the race. Stuart went for a port tack start and was soon followed by starboard starters Gareth and John who tacked to follow him. Stuart rounded the windward mark first, but on the second reach he found himself as the meat in the sandwich between Gareth and John, who eased past him. As the three of them went down the run the wind filled in from behind, and Paul and Chris P closed the gap to be within striking distance.

On the next beat Gareth drew away to build a three minute lead. Meanwhile Paul overtook Stuart and started challenging John. John and Paul were within a boat length of one another as they approached the final leeward mark. They both went wide to gybe before rounding the mark. Stuart managed to establish an overlap, but it meant having to simultaneously gybe and steer through the narrow gap, which proved a step too far. He rounded up too much, stalled and then got entangled with the mark. Fortunately he was able to extricate himself, do a penalty turn and get through the line before Chris P could take advantage. So the finishing order was Gareth, John, Paul, Stuart and Chris P.

Race 5

Paul was first to round the windward mark followed by Gareth and John. These three stayed in close company round the rest of the course, but then a developing hole between the final leeward mark and the finish line caused them major problems. Gareth and Paul were forced to make multiple tacks as the odd zephyr shifted markedly. Finally Gareth crawled over the line with Paul taking another 30 seconds to do the same.

Meanwhile John, who had sailed closer to the shore, found himself becalmed there. This allowed Stuart, who had benefitted from a bit more pressure down the run, to round the mark and sail past him to claim third by 5 seconds.



John made Gareth work hard for his title © John Hunter

Race 6

The final race was sailed over one lap of a windward-leeward course. Gareth was first to the windward mark followed closely by Paul, John and Chris P. The fleet were bunched up down the run, with Gareth just a few boat lengths ahead. There was a close fight up the short beat to the line, and Gareth, Paul, John and Chris P, in that order, finished within the space of just 22 seconds.

Catapult Nationals results

His hard won but perfect scoreline enabled Gareth Ede to add his name to the Catapult Class Association National Trophy for the 11th time. John Terry, a two times winner of the trophy, came second, and Paul Ellis, who has won the title a total of three times, claimed third place despite competing infrequently in the recent past.

Rank	Helm	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Race 6	Points
1	Gareth Ede	(1)	1	1	1	1	1	5
2	John Terry	2	2	2	2	(4)	3	11
3	Paul Ellis	3	3	(5)	3	2	2	13
4	Chris Phillips	4	4	3	(5)	5	4	20
5	Stuart Ede	(5)	5	4	4	3	5	21
6	Rob Sloggett	(6)	6	6	6	6	6	30
7	Chris Upton	7	7	(RET)	DNC	DNC	DNC	38

Results compiled using SailWave

The Nationals results also count towards the Jon Montgomery Travellers Trophy Series. Gareth's win further consolidates his position at the top of the table with John Terry in second place and George Evans in third. Gareth retains the Blue and Yellow Pennants as event winner and series leader, respectively.

Personal Handicap results

The Catapult Class Association runs the Alastair Forrest Personal Handicap Series in parallel with the level rating series. Chris Phillips earned himself the Lilac Pennant for winning on handicap, while Stuart Ede, who came second in this event, grabs the series lead by one point and the right to fly the Magenta Pennant at the next event.

Rank	Helm	Rating	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Race 6	Points
1	Chris Phillips	920	(2)	2	1	1	2	1	7
2	Stuart Ede	902	(3)	3	2	2	1	2	10
3	Paul Ellis	860	(5)	4	5	3	3	3	18
4	John Terry	818	1	(7)	3	5	5	5	19
5	Gareth Ede	765	4	(6)	4	4	6	6	24
6	Rob Sloggett	880	(6)	5	6	6	4	4	25
7	Chris Upton	1010	7	1	(RET)	DNC	DNC	DNC	32

Results compiled using SailWave