

# Tiger Trophy 2008 Race Report

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There was a spectacular sight out on Rutland Water this weekend as five hundred of the country's keenest sailors made it on the water to compete for the Tiger Trophy. They came from 95 different clubs and were sailing in 47 different types of boat. The Tiger Trophy is considered by many to be the best UK sailing event in the winter calendar..

2-3 February 2008

Photo courtesy Tania Samus

There was a spectacular sight out on Rutland Water this weekend as five hundred of the country's keenest sailors made it on the water to compete for the Tiger Trophy. They came from 95 different clubs and were sailing in 47 different types of boat. The Tiger Trophy is considered by many to be the best UK sailing event in the winter calendar. The event is dedicated to the late John Merricks, a local lad, 1996 Olympic silver medalist and our leading sailor of the time, who died tragically in a car accident in 1997. The event raises money for The John Merricks Sailing Trust which was set up after his death to advance the education, physical and mental development of young people in need (under the age of 25 years) with a view to promoting the achievement of their potential through the sport of sailing.

Last year it was a light wind drifter &ndash; there was certainly none of that this year! The competitors set out on the Saturday in near on perfect wind conditions &ndash; about 15mph &ndash; although a touch on the chilly side. They launched and ran downwind, with brightly coloured spinnakers flying, until they reached the dam where the start line was positioned. The fast boats were to start first. These boats ranged from the Olympic high performance boat; the 49er down to the youth high credibility boat the 29er which had the biggest fleet at 30 boats. Also in this fleet was the 'mad' foiling moth. This is a development boat which has got narrower and narrower over the years and now has a hydrofoil underneath which allows the boat to lift out of the water supported only by the small torpedo like shape on the bottom.

In the slow handicap fleet there were also a range of boats. There were the other youth squad boats the 420 and the Laser as well as the more traditional boats including the 60 year old Firefly. Both fleets got away cleanly and began the beat up towards the North-Eastern tip of Hambleton Peninsula. Once around the first mark the spinnakers were hoisted and the boats disappeared downwind in a sea of spray. The wind kept building throughout the first race and soon there were a few swimmers. Towards the end of the race the wind was strong and blustery and there were numerous boats struggling in the now bitter conditions. There were upturned hulls scattered across the water and the rescue crews kicked into action providing fantastic safety cover to all. The toughest survived and it was Graham Vials in his Foiling Moth who took the top spot. Sam Pascoe in his RS600 took the second spot.

With the wind not subsiding between the races the action continued. For those watching from Sykes Lane there was a great viewing platform. Boats were whizzing in all directions, sails were flapping trying to spill some of the additional wind and crews were arriving in the water with a splash. By this time many boats had realised their limitations and sailed to the safety of the nearest shore to be towed home later. The rest of the boats waited for the start of the second race. The fast

fleet got away cleanly again, however the slow fleet were keener to start nearer to the first mark and with a number of them over the line a general recall was called.

Some boats decided enough was enough and in the freezing conditions they continued to sail to the clubhouse. With the wind best described as squally the mad moth had less success although he did manage an amazing 19th. First was the Fireball of David Wade and Ben Macrane showing why it was once one of the most popular racing classes in the country. Second was home talent: Richard Stenhouse and third multiple Endeavour winners Roger Gilbert and James Stewart in their Merlin Rocket in third. It was only the hardy who completed all three races on the Saturday. It was the 420 of James Rushden and Joe Williams from Highcliff who showed that youth can come out on top in the breeze. In second was Graham Vials again in his moth with Mee Matt and Richard Wagstaff from Hollingworth Lake in third.

There were a few tired people at the infamous John Merricks Ball that evening..

Sunday was the pursuit race. All the boats start at different times depending on their inherent speed and after two hours if they are all sailing to the same level they should all be at the same point on the course. So the slow boats start first and the faster ones later.

The course took advantage of the fabulous size of Rutland and provided a spectators feast with spinnakers up from off the golf course right down to the tower off Whitwell. First to start were the Laser 4.7s and the Firefly with probably the youngest participant of the day; Ella Stoggall, more normally seen in an Optimist, was to be found crewing for current Endeavour winner Steve Tylecote. Her gutsy spirit kept her out on the water for the full 2 hours despite the continuous spray over her face. The 420s showed their pace in the conditions and quickly made it to the front of the fleet. They were there to be chased by the faster boats for the next 100 minutes. A tight reach separated the men from the boys in all classes with only the best able to hold the spinnaker down the whole leg.

Photo courtesy Tania Samus

As the finish time approached it was still Ben and Tim Saxton in their 420 leading the fleet. As the minutes counted down the gap between these three was diminishing all the time and there must have been a few anxious checks of the watch going on between the brothers in the 420. But hold the lead they did and when the finish gun went there was significant jubilation in their boat. In second was Dylan Fletcher apparently sailing crewless in his 29er! Then in third was the ever present moth of Graham Vials. Junior sailors James Peter and Ed Fitzgerald in their 29er managed a very impressive 4th narrowly ahead of triple times Endeavour winner Nick Craig and Toby Lewis in their newly purchased B14.

Overall results saw Graham Vials in his foiling moth with amazing consistency coming first. Second were Grahame Newton and Tim Needham in their Fireball &ndash; no gold medal races but great consistency throughout. Third was Rutland superstar Richard Stenhouse in his Musto Skiff.

## Results

- First :- Graham Vials Foiling Moth from Derwent Reservoir
- Second:- Grahame Newton and Tim Needham in a Fireball from Staunton Harold
- Third:- Richard Stenhouse in a Musto Skiff from Rutland
- First female helm and 9th overall :- Anna Burnett and David Kohler in a 420 from Royal Northern and Clyde YC
- First juniors and 4th overall :- James Peters and Ed Fitzgerald in a 29er from Hayling Island
- First youths and 5th overall:- Ben and Tim Saxton in a 420 from Grafham Water

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- Photographs
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