

## VRsport.tv International Moth UK Nationals at the WPNSA - Day 1

Seventy-three boats have signed on for the 2016 VRsport.tv International Moth UK Nationals at the Weymouth & Portland National Sailing Academy. With the odd lightning strike off Chesil Beach and a huge storm over Dorchester, the fleet were released to leave the shore once it was deemed safe enough to sail in Portland Harbour, with racing getting underway just 20 minutes after the scheduled 1pm start time.

The easterly breeze was set to swing around to the south and drop so the race team, led by Bryan Drake, were keen to get as much racing in as possible before this happened. In the end just a single race was possible. A second race was started, but with the vast majority of the fleet low-riding, and those who did manage to get foiling dropping down and stopping once they'd gybed, the race was inevitably abandoned.

David Hivey won the race after finishing 12th at last year's nationals. We spoke to him about what has made the difference this year, "Boatspeed. I've been spending a lot of time with Rob (Greenhalgh). He's a pretty difficult man to beat so I've been working pretty hard to get around the same speed as him."

On how much time he's been spending out on the water David said, "Probably about the same as the professionals! Because I'm a teacher I've spent most of the past 7 weeks sailing. I also managed to spend 3 weeks sailing over Easter and school gave me a week off for the Europeans which was amazing and I've also had 2 weeks training on Lake Garda with Rob."

"I had a real issue with tacking last year. My boatspeed was almost there and I was rounding the top mark in the top 5 sometimes, but I was capsizing on 50% of my tacks. So I've probably tacked 10,000 times since January trying to make sure I sorted that out."

On what the draw is to the International Moth over other fleets he's said in, such as the Lasers, RS200s, 400s & 800s David said, "The standard is higher at the very top end as we've got the Olympics guys, and professional sailors who aren't doing the Olympic classes, so at the very top end it's the best racing you're going to get. But even outside of this you have people who are sailing the boat all the time so the level is very, very high."

"The draw is the competition and the boat itself - you can have a bad day in a Moth and it's still good fun."

Second placed Robert Greenhalgh was pleased with his opening race, "I didn't have the greatest start to the race. I crossed the line on port and was probably being a little conservative and rounded the top mark in 4th and to fight back a bit. The second (abandoned) race was a bit of a lottery. I was in the lead when they canned it, but canning it was the right thing to do."

Robert said on his training with David Hivey, "We've got the same kit and he's going quick and he's trying hard so it's good to be pushed."

Robert's schedule this year has included sailing the Fast 40+ 'Invictus' and also the record-breaking MOD70 'Phaedo3' and we asked if this had impacted on the time he had available for Moth sailing, "I haven't had a huge amount of sailing in the Moth recently, but enough and I'm certainly not going to use it as an excuse. More is always better, but with 4 or 5 days here I think we'll see everyone improve as the event goes on."

Andrew Budgen, while well known in other fleets and through his Monster Project Volvo 70, is competing in his first Moth UK Nationals and is the leading 'first timer' after finishing the day's race

in 6th. We spoke to him after the racing, "We had a nice bit of breeze early on which obviously suits me, being one of the bigger guys in the fleet. I had a reasonable start and it might have actually been the first race I've ever done where I flew the whole way round without hitting the deck! I've been working on the boat all week trying to get a new sail plan together which has maybe made a difference. It's the kind of boat that you want to be out in quite a lot."

First home-build over the line was Alister Richardson in 8th, who was sailing his new Moth which has been two years in the making, "It was my first time racing in the boat which was good fun. It's been in development the whole time of the build and it's still in development!"

There are a couple of unique features on the boat including a foredeck-less bow and tapered stern. We asked Alister to describe these more, "The thinner transom is for less drag when its low riding and it's also supposed to help a little bit when it's popping out of the water - less of a brake effectively. On the front I haven't got a foredeck and the intention is to get the mast down onto that and get rid of the stump altogether, but that's phase two. I'm just trying to get it to go alright in the same configuration as every other Moth before I start getting more radical."

Principal Race Officer Bryan Drake summed up his thoughts about the day and trying to get more racing in, "The Moths foil for a good race and if they can't foil it's not much fun. In the second race we had a few people foiling on the corners where the wind was stronger and they walked away from the others, but as they came downwind towards us the wind decreased and they dropped back in the water and from a Moth point of view I didn't think it was a fair race.

"Races are timed at about 30 minutes each so we can catch up on the schedule. We can turn around races in less than an hour so there's no difficulty in getting in 4 races if they've got the stamina to do so."

There's set to be 15 to 20 knots on Sunday so the fleet is looking forward to a high speed blast around Portland Harbour.