

## Mediterranean Medway: Sonata Silver Jubilee Nationals at MYC

### Summary Report

Thirty four yachts entered for the Sonata Jubilee National Championships held this year for the first time on the River Medway. The sun shone for all but one of the days and the racing was, in the words of visitor Robbie Richardson from Strangford Lough, Ireland, where the last Sonata Nationals were held, fantastic.

The overall winner was six-times National Sonata Champion, Steve Goacher from Royal Windermere Yacht Club, Second, David Townshend, Medway Yacht Club and third, Tom White, HRSC. Apart from two races, Goacher maintained his hold on the Championships with a run of first places, the first break being provided by Medway yacht Exposition - Tim Townsend – on the Tuesday morning race and the second was in the medium distance race on the final day where Goacher finished 13th having ensured his overall victory the day before.

The races took place between 30th July and 3rd August, in near perfect conditions, with winds between force two and four, from almost every point of the compass, allowing Principle Race Officer, Leslie Brooman, to set a challenging mix of courses in the lower River Medway which, with its combination of reaches at right-angles to each other, proved to be excellent water for such an event. Race management was of the highest calibre, with on-course umpires and a committee boat team who already run another successful National Championship (Wayfarers) a few weeks previously.

The guidelines for National Sonata Championship racing specify a mix of windward/leeward courses, one long distance race and one medium distance race. Three days were dedicated to windward/leewards in the outer reaches of the river where the width near the top of the flood allowed accurate start lines to be set with a fair bias to allow for the tidal conditions. The Wednesday provided a 'long distance' race which encompassed various buoys in the Thames estuary whilst the 'medium distance' race on Friday took competitors around a series of navigational marks in the river. In the event, the courses set denied the local yachts the advantage of local knowledge and provided a week of fair and very competitive racing. This was proved by the results, with visitors taking first, third, fourth and fifth places, the local Medway boats achieving a second and the balance of the top ten places.

In keeping with the prestigious timing of this year's event, the celebration of the Class's 25th Silver Jubilee Year, the hosts, Medway Yacht Club, provided the venue for a continuous programme of social events ranging from a river trip on the Kingswear Castle, a 1924 vintage paddle steamer, through a Curry and Kingfisher night supported by principal sponsors, Kingfisher Lager, and culminating in the prizegiving dinner held at the Clubhouse for 130 people. The Sonata fleet proved throughout the week that they could party as hard as they raced! Support from other sponsors included subsidised launching for visitors, some of whom had travelled from as far away as

Northern Ireland and the Clyde, at Gillingham Marina, and a sponsor for each day of racing which enabled the organising committee to provide daily prizes down to sixth place.

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## Overall Results

Pos	Boat Name	Sail No	Crew	Club	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	Pts
1st	Eric The Boat	8748	Steve Goacher	RWYC	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	13	6
2nd	Solution	8275	David Townshend	MYC	12	2	7	3	3	7	5	3	23
3rd	Pizzicato	8038	Tom White	HRSC	8	9	6	8	4	5	4	1	28
4th	Tragedy	8312	Murray Caldwell	Cove	4	11	5	7	5	9	2	5	28
5th	So	8217	Keith Stewart	RTYC	2	5	4	12	12	4	12	2	29
6th	If	8385	Adam Turk	MYC	3	3	9	6	16	6	7	12	34
7th	Pianissimo	8087	Dick Owens	MYC	10	6	3	9	2	16	8	7	35
8th	Musical Express	8424	Mike Harrison	MYC	7	4	8	2	7	8	14	18	36
9th	F Sharp	8408	Jo Bolton	MYC	11	7	24	4	8	DNF	11	10	51
10th	Marimba	8367	John Gyngell	MYC	9	10	13	10	6	20	17	9	57
11th	Exposition	8327	Tim Townsend	MYC	5	13	1	14	15	11	16	16	59
12th	Tosca	8426	John Ivory	MYC	20	14	10	16	9	12	6	8	59
13th	Cock-A-Hoop	8208	Quentin Strauss	MYC	15	12	23	5	25	10	3	15	60
14th	Bad Company	8867	Robbie Richardson	SLYC	13	17	12	15	10	13	10	4	62
15th	Echo	8113	Graham Wright	MYC	6	16	18	11	21	3	19	20	73
16th	Cobweb	8103	Matt Glasgow	RSYC	16	20	15	13	11	2	20	DNF	77
17th	Chrysalis	8114	Chris Bentley	MYC	22	8	25	OCS	13	17	13	6	79
18th	Silver Lining	8421	David Appleton	MCC	14	23	16	22	19	18	15	11	93
19th	Quiet Air	8125	David Onyons	M&MLS	25	15	17	20	14	15	21	19	100
20th	Scirocco	8191	Steve Tribe	RCYC	21	22	11	21	18	25	18	14	103
21st	Mk 4	8181	Keith Lennox	MYC	18	18	20	24	17	26	DSQ	17	114
22nd	Opus	8266	Tony Britten	DSC	19	26	21	25	20	24	9	22	115
23rd	Screwloose	8410	Max Carnegie-Jones	MYC	24	21	19	17	28	14	22	25	117
24th	Harmony	8184	John Clark	MYC	17	19	28	19	23	19	DSQ	24	121
25th	Sticky Fingers	8435	David Fry	REYC	28	24	14	23	22	21	25	23	127
26th	Stiffy	8003	Robin Pharaoh	MYC	23	28	27	18	26	22	DSQ	26	142
27th	Fortune	8175	Charles Pegram	MYC	27	25	26	27	24	27	23	21	146
28th	Sarabande	8366	Jonathan Abbott	MYC	26	27	22	26	27	23	24	27	148
29th	Goodbye Mickey Mouse	8437	Jeremy Bates	MYC	DSQ	204							
29th	Figaro	8297	Tim Gorman	MYC	DSQ	204							
29th	Brahms & Liszt	8425	David Ceaton	MYC	DSQ	204							
29th	Musette	8361	Tim French	MYC	DSQ	204							
29th	Skipper	8219	Brian Douglas	MYC	DSQ	204							

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## MONDAY 30TH JULY – Race One.

The first morning dawned bright and sunny with a light and variable breeze coming and going from the South-South West. After a delayed start to allow the wind to settle, the fleet got away cleanly from a line set at the end of Kethole Reach, some two miles upstream of Sheerness at the entrance to the Medway. The windward/leeward course, with the windward and spreader marks set within 50 yards of each other a mile and a half upwind towards the opposite bank from the line, provided testing conditions for visitors and locals alike with a cross-tide beat into shallow water favouring the starboard side once the flood had been traversed. All bar two of the fleet went right after the start. The nearer East bank, which features a steep mud escarpment with small scalloped bays, tempted two local boats, gamboling on the wind fading and leaving the majority being pushed down by the tide, but the wind held, shifting left about 10 minutes after the start and leaving the two 'flyers' stranded on the wrong side of the river.

By the end of the first lap, Keith Stewart's So, (RTYC) was ahead but Steve Goacher in Eric The Boat set out his stall at the beginning of the next round with a lead which he capitalised on to win the first race. Reading the shifting wind on the second round was decisive with several local boats getting it wrong and ending up with discardable results. The notable exception from the home Club was Adam Turk in If (MYC) who finished third.

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## **MONDAY 30TH JULY – Race Two.**

Tidewise, the second race was almost the reverse of Race One. The Committee Boat managed to set the line with very little adjustment in location, merely swinging it to account for the now ebbing tide. The breeze had steadied to a manageable force two allowing three rounds to be completed without difficulty. Again the right hand side of the course proved favourite, but this time an even longer tack to the extreme edge of the starboard lay line paid dividends with local boat Solution, sailed by David Townshend, gaining four places on the final beat to finish second behind Steve Goacher, who again showed the fleet the way around

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## **TUESDAY 31ST JULY – Race Three.**

Tuesday's forecast promised more sunshine and a NW breeze, force 2 –3. The course was therefore set in Long Reach with the start at the top, up-river end, taking competitors down the river to a windward mark set the other side of the jetty which had provided yesterday's turning point. Geographically, the course was therefore almost the reverse of the previous day. The flood tide was much more of a consideration as it was almost in line with the windward mark which was set about half a mile out from the West bank. Tacking left into the shallows was an obvious maneuver. On the first round of this two round race, everyone kept firmly to the left until the lay-line to the mark was reached, in this case, almost abeam to allow for the flood. Again, Steve Goacher led the pack from the start, but this time not by the margins he had managed to establish on the previous day. The lead changed hands several times on the way around with So predominantly in front. On the second round, a decisive move by local boat Exposition (Tim Townsend, MYC), playing the fickle breeze to considerable advantage, although this took him further out into the waning flood, put him in front of Goacher, a lead which he managed to maintain down the final run, taking first place by four seconds

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## **TUESDAY 31ST JULY – Race Four.**

The afternoon race course was set downriver in a similar position to Monday's, but slightly further down towards buoy 12. Instead of a windward/leeward, the race officer set a figure 8 (Bow-tie) configuration with two shorter beats per round. Two attempts were made to get the fleet away, the second under an I flag. Goacher chose the pin end each time, a successful ploy, and led away, initially on starboard for 50 yards and then put in a very smart tack to cross on port to clear air. After the first round he was some 4 1/2 minutes ahead and by the finish of the shortened course, (3 1/4 rounds were completed of the 4 set), six minutes

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## **WEDNESDAY 1ST AUGUST – Race Five.**

This was the first time in the Championships that navigation played a part with the long distance race over some 15 miles around marks in the Medway, then out across the Thames to the Southend shore, returning up the Medway to a slightly shortened course at Buoy 19, some 2 miles downstream from the Medway Yacht Club. Of all the days of the Championship, this undoubtedly provided the best sailing weather with a steady N – NE breeze taking the fleet down to the river mouth at a good pace. The most critical part of the race was the beat out of the river to Grain Edge buoy on the edge of the Grain bank. This separated the fleet into clusters of seven or eight boats, led by a group containing Steve Goacher, locals Dick Owens, Pianissimo, and David Townshend (Solution Not far behind were another bunch of locals, John Gyngell in Marimba, Mike Harrison in Musical Express, Jo Bolton in F Sharp, a consistently high placed yacht in the just gone Medway Sonata Spring series, John Ivory in Tosca, MYC and Medway Regatta class winner, Chris Bentley in Chrysalis, MYC. The locals certainly didn't have it all their own way on their home waters, however. Tom White's Pizzicato, HRSC, a boat which had been sailed consistently well throughout the series, and Murray Caldwell's Tragedy, from Cove, were both up with the leaders and keeping their positions in single figures.

After Grain Edge the course took a left up the Thames to Nore Swatch buoy, a tight reach under spinnakers, followed by the tack across to West Shoebury buoy over on the Southend shore. With perfect visibility, the Green conical was easy to spot, and despite the previous night's sandbagging by some of the local wags about its relative position to the Southend gasometer, everyone got there in a (more or less) straight line even though the Thames ebb was starting to be felt. From there, it was a slightly more difficult line to estimate to SE Leigh, thence back towards the Medway to Buoy 11, off the Sheerness shore.

The route back into the Medway provided the second real opportunity to gain some ground, but the rhumb line to the Sheerness corner, with careful manipulation of the eddies around the dock, proved the fastest. Most took this option, but a couple tried the Grain shore, unfortunately with unfavourable results. Quentin Strauss, (Cock-a-Hoop, MYC), also known for his Melges, Gill, lost his spinnaker to over-enthusiastic handling on the way back and a good position to boot.

Once in-river, the downwind zig-zags around the Medway buoys gave little chance to change positions and the winner was again Steve Goacher in Eric the Boat, although he was kept on his mettle the whole way home by Pianissimo and Solution who finished second and third respectively, and very close behind him.

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## **THURSDAY 2nd AUGUST – Race Six.**

On Thursday, the weather forgot it was supposed to be Mediterranean, and treated the fleet to a morning race of drizzle and a big mid-race windshift. Perhaps because of the frustrating weather, this day also saw an unusual amount of misdemeanors by the fleet.

In the morning, the light SE breeze made a down-river start and a relatively short windward/leeward course against the flood a sensible option. The first round proceeded according to plan, with

the only taxing decision being where the tide/wind layline was to exactly bang the windward mark. On the run back, however, the wind decided to put a spoke in the proceedings by switching on and off and shifting at the leeward mark. Lucky ones got around alone. Those who hadn't been to Church found themselves bunched with half-a-dozen or more others, with the next group behind closing up fast. To compound the frustration, although Race Officer Brooman had moved the windward mark mid-race further out into the stream to compensate for the shift, the wind carried on swinging, making the next windward into a fetch. The next, and final run, gave more of the same. The youngsters on Cobweb, Matt Glasgow, RSYC, showed their skills in reacting quickly to the fickle conditions, and achieved a coveted second place behind the now almost inevitable Goacher, closely followed by Echo, (Graham Wright and Roger Griffiths, MYC).

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## **THURSDAY 2nd AUGUST – Race Seven.**

The situation now became increasingly trying for both Race Officer and crews as the rain strengthened and the wind became more unsettled. After a two-hour wait, the gun finally went only to be followed by two more for a General Recall as the combined eagerness of the competitors to get away betrayed them. Deciding to take no nonsense from the elements or the fleet, the black flag was broken out for the first time. But again Neptune and fate intervened, this time in the form of the increasing tide, which swept boats perilously close to the line, and three were judged over for sure, with the rest out of sight behind. There was no option but another General, and black flag. At last everyone left got away cleanly and the three short rounds made a decent race of it, led by the now unstoppable Eric the Boat followed closely by another visitor, Tragedy, with a well deserved second place. Local boats shared the top 10 positions, led by Quentin Strauss, Cock-a-Hoop with another 3 visitors.

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## **FRIDAY 3rd AUGUST – Race Eight.**

The final, middle-distance race featured a round-the-cans race within the River Medway. The weather got back on track and provided a steady SW breeze and cloudless sky. The laid windward mark was some 2 miles upstream from the line, giving a windward course up the length of Long Reach. The line was biased to Port, tempting a majority of the fleet to the left, but in the event, a middle of line start paid, with only one short hitch being necessary from there. Murray Caldwell in the lead at the turn, unfortunately mis-read the position of the next mark, buoy 23, and gave the lead to local David Townshend, who knew exactly where he was going. The route established, a long downwind leg was next with most following the advice given at the Skippers Briefing at the beginning of the week to 'bang the corners' when on the Medway. Strangely, Eric the Boat was nowhere to be seen in the front half of the fleet, but apparently he made up for this slip? by cruising around the middle markers offering advice on sail trim. One bit of advice he should have heeded himself was not to follow Mike Harrison, Musical Express, up a shore which hid a very substantial chunk of concrete. However, Mike, who should have known better, obligingly pointed it out to him by ramming it at 5knts. It was on occasions like this when the Goacher team demonstrated one of the reasons they achieve their results by executing a perfect 90° gybe out in 2 seconds flat.

Back on the windward return leg, the front markers were pulling out all the stops to change the pecking order in the absence of the maestro. Top four were Pizzicato, So, and the two home boats of Solution and Chrysalis. Biting at their heels were a

hungry pack of half-a-dozen, including the Irish Bad Company (Robbie Richardson, SLYC), who, after a disappointing series of results, was determined to redeem honour with a single figure finish. A good tack put both himself and Pianissimo in front of Chrysalis, and he then continued to pull away, but not quite enough to catch the front three. Rearguard action by Chrysalis kept Pianissimo at bay, but at the expense of letting Tragedy through.

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