

H R Owen National Championship 2006

Report by Becky Jackson,
photos by the Gozzetts



Monday 10 July

After Sunday afternoon's practice race was called off due to strong winds, all 27 Sonatas were keen to begin the first race of the H R Owen Sonata National Championship at Dabchicks Sailing Club, West Mersea. Although the sun was shining, the wind was less enthusiastic and the morning's race had to be postponed for almost an hour as the race committee waited for the breeze to fill in. Eventually the planned windward/leeward course was set and race one got underway but the constantly shifting wind meant conditions were difficult for both the competitors and organisers alike. The defending champion 'Eric the Boat' helmed by Greg Pitt sailed consistently well, leading from the start to take race one comfortably ahead of Tim Townsend's 'Exposition'. Two local boats also found themselves in the top ten with 'Redbone' finishing in eighth place and the all-youth crew of 'The Apprentice' coming home tenth.

As the cloud cover built and the wind steadily increased the second race of the day got underway. This time the start line was much more heated and Race Officer Peter Fitt was forced to demand two general recalls before finally resorting to the black flag in order to ensure the boats stayed behind the line. With the threat of disqualification looming, crews were much better behaved and the second race began with only one boat penalised. The hectic start set the tone for the rest of the race that even saw one crewmember scrambling up the mast near the leeward mark, battling to untangle an errant spinnaker. However the drama was not enough to distract the fleet leaders and the top three boats remained constant throughout the second race. Dabchicks' members Jess Gozzett and Jack Grogan celebrated their first victory in the Sonata class bringing 'The Apprentice' home comfortably ahead of Neil McLure's 'So' in second and 'Eric the Boat' in third.

Tuesday 11 July

Tuesday began in a similar manner to the previous day as the Race Officer once again ordered two general recalls before resorting to the black flag. However this time competitors were on their best behaviour and the third race of the series got under way successfully. 'Eric the Boat' led from the outset and had established a comfortable distance between himself and second placed 'Musical Express' by the end of the race. The first local to finish was 'Redbone', sailed by two husband and wife pairs this boat continued with their run of consistently high finishes. Unfortunately the light but steady breeze from the morning quickly dropped out and with no hope of the wind returning the race team was forced to abandon the second race of the day.

Wednesday 12 July

Only one race was planned for Wednesday, the Championship's half way point, and once again competitors were able to enjoy near perfect conditions. Continuing an apparent trend for the week, defending national champion 'Eric the Boat' once again came home in front, their third win in four races. Their fantastic form leaves them a comfortable seven points clear of second placed 'So' in the overall series. Also enjoying promising form is local youth crew Jack Grogan and Jess Gozzett sailing 'The Apprentice'. They continued their run of top ten finishes yesterday with a 9th place leaving them lying in 6th place in the series and top Mersea crew. But with four more races to be fitted-in over the next two days, the Championship is far from over. Only a few points separate those in the top ten and fierce competition looks set to ensue as crews look to outwit their fellow competitors.

Thursday 13 July

The final two days of the Sonata National Championships, held at West Mersea's Dabchicks Sailing Club, saw competitors complete 5 races in steadily increasing winds, a challenge which led to some exciting racing



and unexpected incidents. A steady force four breeze meant Race Officer Brain Bolton kept the fleet busy on Thursday, fitting in three back-to-back races. Defending national champion 'Eric the Boat' continued on fine form, winning the first two races of the day and coming a very respectable third in the day's final race. This superb set of results was enough to ensure they retained their title as Sonata National Champions, as well as giving them a well-deserved race off on the final day.

Friday 14 July

Despite the fact that the championship title had already been claimed, the remaining competitors enjoyed some thrilling racing on the final day of the series. With gusts reaching up to 30 knots crews battled hard in testing conditions, which left several boats with broken halliards and one missing a rudder! 'Presto' won their first race of the series with a solid performance that saw them finish a good distance ahead of second placed 'Brahms & Liszt'. Another crew who managed well in difficult conditions was the local youth boat 'The Apprentice' who finished in third place. After a relaxing day without racing the crew of 'Eric the Boat' picked up their prize, the National Champion Pimms Trophy, and congratulated Dabchicks' Commodore Martin Cartwright responded, "As a club we have all really enjoyed the event and would dearly love to see you all here again soon". The success of this year's championship clearly demonstrates the enthusiasm and skill with which Dabchicks organises high-class sailing events and the suitability of the River Blackwater for keelboat competitions.

Final results in order of sailing

	Sail No	Boat	Owner	Club	Pts	R1	R2	R3	R5	R6	R7	R4	R8
1	8748	ERIC THE BOAT	Andy Laurie & Greg Pitt	Royal Windermere YC	8	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	28
2	8425	BRAHMS & LISZT	Keith Lord	Douglas Bay YC	22	28	7	3	2	8	7	1	2
3	8217	SO	Neil McLure	Dalgety Bay SC	22	4	2	4	4	3	9	5	28
4	8327	EXPOSITION	Tim Townsend & Mark Lee	Medway YC	26	2	5	7	7	10	6	2	4
5	8087	PIANISSIMO	Dick Owens	Medway YC	27	3	6	5	6	4	3	10	28
6	8424	MUSICAL EXPRESS	K Hook & M Harrison	Medway YC	36	12	4	2	14	5	11	4	10
7	8377	PRESTO	John Waters	Poole YC	38	28	28	8	3	12	8	6	1
8	8093	THE APPRENTICE	Jack Grogan & Jess Gozzett	DSC & WMYC	38	6	1	12	9	9	10	11	3
9	8364	REDBONE	Marc Purdie & Leanne Purdie	Dabchicks SC	48	9	8	6	11	2	20	15	12
10	8114	CHRYSLIS	Chris Bentley	Medway YC	56	8	28	17	13	20	2	9	7
11	8157	CINNABAR	Gareth Martell	Aberdeen University SC	63.5	17	9	10.5	15	11	4	14	15
12	8090	CAMEL TOE	Dan Willett & Simon Farren	Brightlingsea SC & Dabchicks SC	64	5	28	18	12	6	13	17	11
13	8300	SELENE	Kevin Cross	Poole YC	64	7	10	23	8	7	22	19	13
14	8436	MUNCHKIN	I Theobald	Orwell YC	69	15	14	13	5	13	18	22	9
15	8872	WHITE MAGIC	David Matthews	Sunderland YC	70	13	11	9	10	19	16	13	14
16	8189	BLUETACK	Dave Boatman	Sunderland YC	70.5	14	28	10.5	16	17	5	8	28

17	8305	PICCOLO	John Putt	Parkstone	73	11	15	15	19	22	17	7	8
18	8922	AUBIE TOO	Roger Sydenham & Tony Hawkes	Dabchicks SC	76	10	18	19	20	16	15	12	5
19	8255	ZEBEDEE	Ben Delap	Medway YC	81	16	13	14	17	15	21	21	6
20	8275	DUET	Barry Cann & Wendy Plimley	Medway YC	88	20	12	16	25	14	12	16	18
21	8141	GHOSTBUSTER	Ian Vince & Brian George	Dabchicks SC	113	19	17	22	18	23	14	28	28
22	8410	SCREWLOOSE	Paul Kirk	Medway YC	121	21	20	20	21	21	25	18	28
23	8369	SPRING SONATA	Andrew Baker	Medway YC	125	23	19	24	28	26	23	20	16
24	8315	ARPEGGIO	Mervyn Denny & Brian Denny	Dabchicks SC	128	25	23	27	22	24	19	23	17
25	8385	IF	R Turk	Medway YC	129	18	16	25	28	18	27	25	28
26	8297	FIGARO	Bennett & Rolland	Stone SC	132	24	21	21	23	25	24	24	19
27	8420	WATERSONG	Graham Minter	Medway YC	140	22	22	26	24	27	26	26	20