

**DRB Marine 2010
Sonata National
Championships**
Report by Peter Booth

More pictures on [Duncan Hall's web site](#). Results on the [Helensburgh Sailing Club web site](#).



This championship was held at Helensburgh Sailing Club over 4 days from the 10th to the 13th June. There were 16 entries including many times national champion and sailmaker Steve Goacher from Windermere sailing Eric the Boat and current national champion Dave Boatman from Sunderland sailing Blue Tack, so a keenly fought event was expected especially with the Scottish boats not prepared to let them have it all their own way.

Early form from Jazz and Blue-tack

A practice race was held on the Wednesday evening as part of the normal East Patch evening series and this was won by Jazz from Fiddlesticks and Firebird.

Race officer, Donald McLaren and all the fleet were a little concerned that the weather forecast for the event was for very light winds for the whole four days. On Thursday morning we got up to bright sunshine and a nice force 2/3 south easterly breeze. With everyone keen to make a good start, too many boats were over the line for the race officer to identify them so we had a general recall. Second attempt and off we went a good start and a tricky beat into the outgoing tide off Ardmore point. It was Blue Tack who dominated from the start and they went on to win from So with Eric the boat third and Scruples fourth.

Race two and off first time on a similar windward-leeward course and again Dave Boatman sailed Blue Tack to victory with Eric the Boat second and Jazz third with Saraband fourth. The dying wind meant that the race officer had to shorten at the second windward mark and 3 boats were left unable to finish within the time limit as the tide became too strong and the wind died.

Firebird and Eric fight back

Friday dawned with a more cloudy day but with some sunshine and a perfect NW force 3 increasing at times up to 4 and gusting to force 5. Still concerned over getting sufficient races in Donald decided that we would go for 4 races. With a perfect breeze and a good course with a beat from Ardmore up towards the Gareloch this was to be the start of a change in fortune for Blue Tack and after holding an early lead it was the crew of Firebird, who the previous day had missed the time limit, that sailed the best race to win from Blue Tack with Eric and Saraband fourth. With slight adjustments to the windward marks and the start line the second race began and this time the crew of Eric must have felt a little under pressure as they really showed their talent and won a close race from Blue Tack with So third and Jazz fourth.

With Naval movements due and other problems with shipping, the race officer wisely decided not to hold a passage race today so a third race was held again on a windward-leeward course and with the wind increasing we were getting some great races in. Blue Tack again proved their quality and struck back to win again from Eric with Saraband third and Jazz again fourth. In order to get a series of races completed, Donald radioed the fleet and asked if anyone wanted to protest if he held a sixth race as there was little wind forecast for the

next 2 days. There was no such protest as we were all enjoying it so much. In this race there was a windshift to the right of the course which is the usual preferred side at Helensburgh and whilst he didn't get the full benefit of this Steve did manage to get clear and win from young Ross Flatman in second sailing Fiddlesticks with Random FFD third and Dave fourth in Blue Tack. The leading position at the end of Friday with the discard coming in still had Blue Tack in the lead by 2 points from Eric the Boat.

A close tussle for the lead

On day 3 Saturday we had a nice sunny day with a very pleasant force 3 which did have a few stronger gusts in it. Again the wind was in the NW and race 7 was set up again with a similar beat to the previous day. By now the crew of Eric was definitely seeing an opportunity that they needed to take if they were going to continue their wonderful record at this event over the years. They took this race from Jazz with Blue Tack third and So fourth. Similarly in the eighth race Eric won but with Blue Tack second from Firebird third and So again fourth.

The race officer then decided that there was still plenty of time and to hold a passage race and with the wind still steady and a great tussle developed between the two leaders. The course was held between the cardinal buoy at the wreck of the 'sugar ship' and down the Clyde with crossing the river estuary between Greenock and Kilcreggan rounding a total of 13 buoys and a finish line close to Helensburgh sailing club. This was a truly great race with Eric and Blue Tack too close to pick who was going to win at the end of the day. It was Blue Tack who led for almost all the race but with a tricky last beat into the mouth of the Gareloch there was nothing to choose between them but finally the victory went to Eric from Blue Tack with So and Firebird just behind after more than 3 hours of racing. This was a sail that I think everybody really enjoyed

Scotch mist and an early finish

And that turned out to be the deciding race as on Sunday morning there was a Scotch mist to greet us and no wind. Donald was not keen to leave it without giving it his best effort to get another race in but the wind gods were not obliging and at 11.00 hrs he rightly displayed the abandonment signal leaving an overall victory to Steve Goacher in Eric the Boat. Dave Boatman, after sailing a terrific series of races, second and Neil Rosie of the local club 3rd from Neil McLure in So just one point behind. Then came Mark Taylor in Saraband who sailed a very consistent series and then sharing the same number of points ie 51 were 3 local boats decided on countback: Firebird 6th, Fiddlesticks 7th and Scruples 8th. The [full results](#) can be seen on the Helensburgh Sailing Club web site along with some [great photos taken by Neill Ross](#). This earlier-than-planned finish enabled the visiting boats all to be lifted out at Rhu marina and boats were on their trailers by 12.30 hrs. The prizegiving was successfully held at 13.30 hrs enabling those with a long journey to get an early start.

...and a little scotch with no mist

On the social side a very enjoyable whisky tasting was held on Thursday with some of the best malts to be sampled, those that were there really enjoyed this event and a raffle was held of 2 fine bottles of malt which raised £175 for the RNLI. On Friday there was live music and a good night was had by all. The most popular social event was held on Saturday when the young ladies of our club who ran the catering for the event provided 100 of us with an absolutely superb meal which I am sure everyone enjoyed and wish to thank Lesley Semple and her helpers for her commitment in providing such a dinner for us all as well as providing breakfasts and teas and coffee whenever necessary and home-made baking available for everyone to sample every time we came ashore. The only disappointment for some of us was the football result, although for some reason not everyone seemed that disappointed.

The daily prizegivings with prizes going through the fleet based on the principle that if you had received one you did not get another ensured that all boats received a prize. The prize of an Icom hand-held VHF radio which we had announced would go to the boat in 10th place went to class chairman Chris Bentley. We are so proud of all our

members who have helped us to put on a really good and enjoyable sailing event and hope that our visitors enjoyed it as much as we did in having you.

I have to record our thanks to those companies who have sponsored us and they are DRB Marine, Goacher Sails, Hyde Sails, New World Yacht Care, Mandersons TV and Audio, Marine Transport and Logistics and also Rhu Marina for their launch, recovery and berthing deal.

A really great event

This event had competitors ages ranging by almost 50 years and we have all enjoyed each others company both on and off the water, which just goes to show that the Sonata is a great class to be a part of. There were no protests throughout the event and no major incidents resulting in damage which is always a relief at the end of the day.

It seems there is an awful lot of work goes into running such an event and one sometimes wonders if the effort is worth the rewards but for those who came and our own fleet of Sonatas we had a ball with great socials so both on and off the water could not have been bettered.

Haste ye back!

Peter Booth