

Noel Marshall funding report – Cadets attend the British Keelboat Youth Qualifier

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The Winter is when all great sailing plans begin to form. Prospects of long summer evenings out on the water are too tempting to go amiss. With a convenient weekend between exams for some and the Cadet Cruise to Galicia for others, the only thing left was to find a boat to use for the weekend.

Katie Schuster (Cadet Captain) and I had chatted about ideas of how to get Cadets on the water outside of the annual Cadet Cruise and introducing the younger members to racing seemed like an excellent idea. Training weekends with the Royal Thames in their J70s at Queen Mary Sailing Club and opportunities on the Isle of Wight were all considered, but one event seemed to fit the bill perfectly. The British Keelboat League Youth Qualifier, to be held at Royal Southern Yacht Club on 22nd and 23rd June was just the ticket. Not only was it a great progression from racing dinghies into keelboats. From my own experience of entering a team whilst at University, the event is extremely well run.

Within no time, the entry fee had been paid and the team assembled – Cadets clearly recognise a good opportunity when they see one! The team, Mike Skidmore, Tristan and Yann Bracegirdle, and myself, were raring to go. The league was the first to introduce the new RS21 keelboats to a racing circuit, and they lived up to their expectations. With plenty of ropes to fiddle with, and the added complexity of spinnakers to handle, the Cadets were immediately put through their paces getting to know the boat without too many races passing.



As it turned out, some of the teams had attended a warm-up day on the Friday, giving them an initial advantage in the first few races. However, over the course of the day our results improved as we began to move up the fleet. By the afternoon our performance had become a little more consistent and had certainly improved on our technique. Perhaps, too, we had a slight weight advantage over the younger teams in the competition. The end of the day brought the evening's celebrations, and the team headed back to the Eaton's for a BBQ and debrief.

The following morning brought the second half of our races, and our weight advantage was looking less useful. The wind seemed to miss their invitation, and tows were offered out to the race area. This was reflected in our results of the second day, as the lighter conditions gave many of the other lighter teams the advantage of the day.

Overall, the team were pleased with their results over the weekend. Competing with the top teams from RORC, RSYC, the Cambridge and Bristol universities was challenging but a great experience. We loved the opportunity to hone our sail trim and boat handling skills, and to put them to the test in a competitive scenario.