



# BRITISH DRAGON ASSOCIATION

## Summer Newsletter 2003

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

**D**ragon sailing has come early this year, with all the regional and national events now behind us, and ahead a summer of club sailing, local regattas, Cowes Week, which scarcely qualifies for that description, and some overseas travelling.

The season got off to a great start with a remarkable 32 boats for the Easter Regatta at Burnham. Then the Southerns at Cowes, the Easterns at Lowestoft, the Scottish Championship, Edinburgh Cup and Northerns were all reasonably well supported and thoroughly enjoyed by extremely competitive fleets, although the numbers at the Edinburgh Cup were down on Falmouth and Cowes in the preceding years.

Last year there were 33 boats at Burnham when it was combined with the Easterns, which is an interesting thought, suggesting that the location and timing attract the numbers rather than the trophy at stake, and it is also a reflection on the health of the Burnham fleet. Perhaps more importantly, the regatta is also before Douarnenez, the Gold Cup at Medemblik, the Europeans at Kinsale and the ever popular Regates Royales in Cannes.

For the UK Dragon fleet, these European events attract a good number of our 'travelling' boats and undoubtedly affect the numbers at our own regattas. There is a limit to the amount of sailing time that can be put in, both for the owners and crews, so it is difficult to do European events and fully support our UK events as well. Equally, for many of us these international competitions represent the best that sailing has to offer, both on and off the water, and is fundamental to why we sail Dragons. No other class can offer such a variety of regattas in such attractive locations and guarantee such a high level of competition or the social scene that goes with them. This can be something of a one way trade, with the exception of our very welcome Irish visitors who can be guaranteed to keep us on our toes, and Frank the Flying Dutchman for whom the same is usually true.

#### Gold Cup in Falmouth

**BUT NEXT YEAR** it is our turn. We host the Gold Cup in Falmouth. The Gold Cup is a special event, and if you are planning a regatta away from home next year, then this should be the one. Special rules define it as open to all with no qualification required, and it is also a series with no discard. This tends to constrain the more aggressive, especially on the start line, as a single transgression is the

end of anyone's hopes of winning. It makes the event is very different and less intense than a European or World championships. Add to that one of the best regatta and holiday locations that we have to offer.

Come and bring the family. Racing starts on 11th July, so get the date in your diary, with the Edinburgh Cup in Torquay beforehand with two weeks in between. There will be arrangements for boats to be left in the area between events. Full details will be on the website [www.dragongoldcup.com](http://www.dragongoldcup.com), and you can get to that through the BDA site [www.britishdragons.org](http://www.britishdragons.org).

#### BDA Website

**OUR SITE IS** undergoing a major refurbishment primarily aimed at making it easier to maintain, and to allow listing of crews and a discussion forum. The new site should be up by the time you receive the newsletter.

#### Jubilee

**THE JUBILEE BALL** at the Four Seasons Hotel on Park Lane will replace the annual dinner next year on the 16th January – the first event to celebrate the 75th year of the Dragon and the occasion for the raffle of *Jubilee*. It will be a wonderful evening to which we are hoping to attract most of the main participants in the class, both current and past, not to mention those who are hoping to win a new Dragon. Full details are elsewhere in the newsletter, but please book early because there is a limit to the numbers that the venue can hold.

The same is true of the 75th Jubilee Regatta at St Tropez. This will be a celebration rather than a competition, with a variety of racing and sailing events and a party to end all parties. Already the event is well over 50% subscribed, so if you are thinking about it, do get your pre-entry in now. 2005 will be a year to remember.

In the meantime let us all hope for good winds and good sailing for the second half of 2003.

**James Mehew**

BDA Website  
[www.britishdragons.org](http://www.britishdragons.org)

# Dragon Scottish Championship and Edinburgh Cup 2003

It was a relatively small band of travellers who made the trip to the Royal Northern and Clyde Yacht Club for this year's Scottish Championships and Edinburgh Cup, affected by major Regattas shortly in Holland and Ireland. It seemed, sadly, that there were more than a few 'Sassenachs' who had deemed the journey north to be just too far, or the event just too cold and wet, but the reduced entries from the south were offset by an invasion from the Irish Dragon fleets.

Those sceptics who expected the Scottish weather to give them a good soaking just rigging the boat were emphatically disproved, with warm glorious sunshine bathing the car park at Rhu marina on both the Friday and Saturday.

The Clyde Dragon fleet has sadly dwindled over the years, but the welcome at the sumptuous Royal Northern and Clyde YC was nothing less than convivial, with pretty much every member of the club and its staff, whether they were involved with the championships or not, falling over themselves to make the whole Dragon Fleet extremely welcome.

## SCOTTISH CHAMPIONSHIP

Racing for the Scottish Championship started on the Sunday lunchtime, in patchy sunshine and not much breeze. The ever-patient and highly professional Principal Race Officer David Witton was forced to wait for the wind to fill in while the fleet drifted aimlessly for an hour or so.

The race finally got underway in testing conditions, where the windward mark became a leeward mark halfway up the patience-testing first beat, and it was Irish visitor Simon Brien in *Kin* who made the best of the lottery, clinching a sensibly foreshortened race win, trailed by Rob Campbell in *Quicksilver* and Nigel Cole's *Tsunami*. The afternoon's race was slightly breezier, by comparison, and it was Rory Bowman in *Yeah Baby* who made the best of the somewhat strengthened airs, with Owen Pay's *Njord* and Ron James's *Fei-Linn Flirtation* trailing. However, Clive Morgan in *Amok* amazed many by becoming the overnight leader in his first championship, proving that consistency pays with two fourths.

Monday was a long day for many, not only because of the schedule of three races to sail, but because the breeze, although a little more consistent in strength, was blowing from the tall hills behind Greenock, providing the fleet with more than a few testing wind shifts. Bowman read the shifts to best effect in the day's first race, trailed by Danny Sinclair's *Eclipse*, and Rob Campbell in *Quicksilver*, who came out top of the pile in Race Four, followed by Martin Makey in *Ganador* and Simon Brien's *Kin*.

*Eclipse* gained line honours in the long fifth and final race with James Mehew in *Comanche* and the omnipresent *Kin* boys chasing close behind, but it was the consistent

Bowman who wrapped up the series with two firsts, two fourths, and a discarded first race eleventh. Campbell came in second overall, trailing by just one point, while Sinclair was two points adrift and third overall.

## EDINBURGH CUP

After Tuesday's layday, the 14-strong fleet was strengthened on Wednesday to a more respectable 26 boats on the start-line for the first race in the Edinburgh Cup 'main event'.

Everyone was obviously keen to get the event underway, with a couple of general recalls before PRO David Witton hoisted the black flag and bagged three premature starters. Once the fleet was properly out of the blocks, Race One was eventually won by Eric Williams' *Ecstatic*, followed by *Yeah Baby*, and Clare Hogan in *Cloud*. The day's second race was won by *Kin*, with *Quicksilver* in second place, and

trailed by *Eclipse*.

Thursday's racing was no less intense, with Race Three falling to Martin Payne helming *Elusive*, chased hard by *Kin*, and followed by *Yeah Baby*. Race Four was won by Ricky Gillingham in *Navaho*, with Bowman starting to stamp his authority on the series in second place, and Clare Hogan in *Cloud* on the bottom step of the podium.

After Thursday evening's Crews Union dinner still thumping in many heads, the fleet were relieved to only have to do one race on the Friday. This was won by the sensibly sober 'daddy' Rory Bowman, followed by a doubtless slightly less sober Martin

Payne and Simon Brien with his infamous *Kin* drinking team.

Hot, sunny, and airless weather returned for Saturday morning's final race, in which only *Kin* or *Yeah Baby* were able to win the series. The light winds and huge wind shifts once again shook up the usual pecking order. Clare Hogan's win and Ricky Gillingham's third place gave them both a boost up the order, whilst Martin Payne's second placing allowed Ivan Bradbury's *Elusive* to leap-frog into second overall, pushing *Kin* and *Quicksilver* down to third and fourth respectively.

However, it was Rory Bowman, ably crewed by Chris Pank and Duncan Grindley, who, having had rotten luck in the final race, held on to first overall by two points, was able to engrave his name on the Edinburgh Cup for the fifth time.  
**Toby Marshall**

## EDINBURGH CUP Overall Results

1st *Yeah Baby* Rory Bowman, Chris Pank, Duncan Grindley, 14pts ; 2nd *Elusive* Martin Payne, Ivan Bradbury, Theis Palm, 16pts; 3rd *Kin* Simon Brien, Mark Brien, Davey Gomes, 17pts; 4th *Quicksilver* Rob Campbell, Jonathan Hill, René Nel, 22pts; 5th *Cloud* Clare Hogan, Mel Collins, Michael Webb, 24pts.

...staff falling  
over themselves to make  
the whole Dragon Fleet  
extremely welcome

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Rory Bowman

# Future Edinburgh Cup Format

*Recently returned from Rhu, Ricky Gillingham suggests a new formula and sets out his proposal for a regional event over three days, followed by a four-day format Edinburgh Cup – aimed at increasing participation at both events*

**W**e recently came back from an extremely enjoyable Edinburgh Cup, well organized by the Royal Northern and Clyde in Rhu. Unfortunately, due to work and family commitments (our crew have seven children under 14 between us), I was unable to take the full week off and so could not compete in the Scottish Championship held over the preceding three days. This has led me to write in support of the short form Edinburgh Cup format.

More accurately I am in favour of the two competition format, a regional event over three days (2,2,1) followed, after a rest day, by the Edinburgh Cup held over four days (2,2,1,1). This format has some obvious advantages over the traditional one race a day arrangement.

1) First and foremost it allows the participation of crews who are simply unable to take a full week and most of two weekends away from other commitments. An examination of the participation over the Edinburgh Cup and Scottish Championship this year reveals that while 16 boats competed in both events, a further 10 participated only in the Edinburgh Cup. I know it is true of our crew, and I assume it holds for the others, that if we had been able to take the full time off, we would have gone to both events. Consequently if the Edinburgh Cup had been held over six days, a number of boats that did compete would not have done.

2) Having two competitions running back to back at the same venue gives more interest, and allows strangers to the venue to gain familiarity with the local conditions prior to the main event. If it takes you two days to spot the bend on the north shore, your Edinburgh Cup challenge will be over!

3) My observation of a number of Edinburgh Cups is that they are not noticeably family affairs. Competitors turn up to sail. With a two-hour time limit per race (few one-design classes have longer races), two races in a day are easily organized. In Scotland this year we were back at the dock by 4.30, leaving ample time for socializing!

Indeed, even if participants have the time available, an event with only one race a day has less appeal than a format that offers more racing in the time. Again speaking only for our crew, we went to Lowestoft, Falmouth and Rhu (all four-day events) and did not go to Cowes because the format did not offer enough racing for the time taken away from the family. Looking at a comparison between the six-day event in Cowes 2002 and the four-day event in Falmouth 2001, the Cowes event attracted about 25 visitors whereas about 40

travelled to Falmouth (the total Cowes numbers were boosted by a local fleet representation of 22).

So much for the advantages, of course by compressing the event we incur three small risks:

1) With a 2,2,1,1 format and a minimum of four races required to complete a valid championship you can only afford two days where racing is not possible before the competition is threatened.

Statistically this must mean that the Cup would not be awarded more frequently. However, folk memory of recent Edinburgh Cups cannot recall an occasion when more than two days were lost to the weather.

2) It may be that there is a constituency of sailors for whom two races a day is a positive disincentive to participate and that the six-day format would draw these boats, which do not currently participate in

the regional competitions, to the event. I am not personally aware of this demand but it may be there.

3) There may be a perception that by compressing the event we somehow undermine the prestige of the competition. I have to believe that the long term standing of the Edinburgh Cup is driven by the size and quality of the competition rather than the length of the event. Indeed we risk devaluing it by adhering to a format that reduces participation. The fact that Douarnenez, the most successful recent competition in the Dragon arena, has adopted a two-race-a-day format should reassure us that it is not a recipe for disaster.

In conclusion I believe that the Edinburgh Cup is under threat if we do not permanently adopt the short form format, as the six-day event will not attract the level of competition to maintain its position as an internationally recognized event. When crews are planning their sailing programme they have available a variety of competing events (Irish or Dutch nationals, Douarnenez etc) which are not much further away than some Edinburgh Cup venues and which could draw support away from our national events. Whereas for those that have time for the longer competitions, the Gold Cup or Europeans often offer reasonable alternatives with the chances of larger fleets.

Therefore I cannot conceive of a situation where the six-day event would attract a larger participation than the four-day version and we have definite evidence that the opposite is true. The short form format has the best chance of competing for the sailing time of our national fleet and should be adopted.

**Rick Gillingham (Navaho)**

**The fact that Douarnenez, the most successful recent competition in the Dragon arena, has adopted a two-race-a-day format should reassure us that it is not a recipe for disaster**

## The Crews Union guide to Identifying your Helmsman

**A**s the start of another season is upon us, and furtive offers of crewing positions are made in darkened bars, the Crews Union has produced a guide to identifying the likely quality of your season's sailing. We all know that our ideal helmsman would provide a fully fitted and rigged boat, with everything working as it should, new sails, plenty of alcohol, a calm demeanour, and a general ability to aim the pointy end in the right direction.

However, what may have seemed like a fantastic offer under the influence of around 15 pints of IPA, it may turn out to be not what it seemed, and needs careful examination to avoid a severely frustrating season.

Consult the following guide to avoid your sailing season ending prematurely in a messy 'divorce'...

**The boat is...** a) brand new; b) an ex-works demonstrator; c) second hand; d) condemned.

**Measurement...** a) Brand new boat, latest shape and down to weight; b) Won't change the boat as it has a certificate, but doesn't measure at stations 6 and 10 so it's faster; c) Boat is so old the certificate was awarded to anything a gentleman of good character said was a Dragon. Helm has an encyclopaedic knowledge of every Dragon built in the UK before 1970, and claims that 'real Dragons grow on trees'. d) It's a Vancouver 29.

**The sails are...** a) brand new – possibly for every regatta; b) somewhat used, but serviceable; c) matured – the owner is a wine buff and treats sails the same way; d) creased, soft, can be folded small enough to fit in your sailing bag, sail trim has no effect on the sail shape, and they are generally good for nothing other than dust covers.

**The running rigging is...** a) Pristine, and does exactly what it should when it should; b) Ropes are well-used, but a bit of coaxing generally gets the relevant kit in the right place at the right time (especially if you pull it from just the right angle), although you do occasionally shoot backwards across the boat if you exert too much pressure on something; c) Everything allegedly works, although no-one understands how, or why, this continues to be the case, particularly when they've seen, or worse, sailed the boat in question. d) The blocks are falling apart, and are likely to come adrift if you dare exert any pressure on them, the sheets are frayed, stiff from salt, and likely to part the first time they are used in a bit of a blow.

**The boat's trailer...** a) Ich habe einer neuer bootsanhänger von Harbeck. Always professionally serviced before every trip away. b) Second-hand Harbeck. Serviced when it needs to be; c) Other brand of trailer. Looking slightly tired, and probably still road legal. d) Rusting heap of junk believed originally built in 1960 for a Soling and badly modified to 'fit' a Dragon. Never serviced, so most of the bearings are likely to give way on your way to the regatta. Probably not road legal, so you hope you don't get stopped going to or from a regatta in the unlikely event you actually make an excursion to other sailing venues.

**Antifouling...** a) What's that? – The boat is dry sailed, and the yard will polish it every week; b) Applied liberally, without the

aid of the crew, then regular lifts by the yard ensure that weed is kept to a minimum; c) Applied sparingly, with the aid of the crew, once a year. Generally, sufficient moaning will produce a sparing application of beer as well. d) What's that? – during sailing season, the bottom has more grass on it than Wimbledon and weed is dealt with on the slip at three-month intervals on a Saturday morning with a trimmer (by the crew).

**Echosounder...** a) Correctly installed and calibrated. Helm always tacks off with just enough depth to spare, but not too much. b) Installed but no-one believes it, or has no echosounder, so helm generally tacks off early, although has been known to strip down, get out and push. c) Helmsman has implicit faith in the sounder, but crew always seen to sail in drysuits. d) Why are there seagulls standing up in the water ahead?

**The helm emails you during the week. He/she...** a) Sends you all the information about sailing you need, as well as loads of great jokes which keeps you in stitches all week; b) Will tell you when there's no sailing this weekend; c) Can't even send a text message, never mind email – you need a crystal ball to know what's happening; d) Sends you all the latest viruses likely to wreck your hard drive. Keeps you busy cursing them and Microsoft in equal measure since you're usually round at their house fixing their computer as well as your own.

**Planning...** a) Crew meets at helmsman's house around Christmas-time to be plied with drinks, food, and plan the next season's campaign. Crew's employers always happy that holiday booked in advance; b) Helm decides what he can afford to do, although crew successfully negotiate additional events. Crew's employer's patience slightly stretched by last-minute requests for time off; c) Decides he wants to do the regatta at the last minute. Pays late-entry fee, but finds at least one of the crew can't get the time off; d) What do you mean we're not sailing this morning after all then?

**New Crew...** a) Unlikely to need new crew since the normal cockpit-jockeys have a mythical devotion to 'the cause' and drop everything to go sailing on the boat. Generally only rock-star super-crew accepted, but will pass on helpful hints to less-experienced crew in the bar with enough alcoholic bribery; b) Booked full-time crew for the season, although will need the occasional replacement due to wedding attendances and suchlike – arranged a week or so in advance. Will happily pass on knowledge to anyone who asks; c) Calls Crews Union Crewsearch at five o'clock on a Friday evening asking whether there are any spare crew available. Professes knowledge to everyone within earshot, but generally it's not worth listening to; d) Will happily accept anyone mad enough to sail with them, pulled off the dock half an hour before the warning gun. Has trouble retaining crew due to incompetence and/or crew-abuse...

**Regatta Circuit...** a) Boat hardly ever sails locally. Loads of travel to big events in great locations all season. Crew arrange Euro bank accounts; b) Will do the Edinburgh Cup and a couple of other open meetings; c) Never goes further

## ...and how to deal with him/her

than the Medway; d) Leaves their own boat at home (out of the water) and pretends to be a crew, depriving good crew of a trip away.

**Regatta Accommodation...** a) Always five-star hotel. Crew have own rooms and appear well rested and fit for the day's racing; b) Nice apartment, in the same block as the rest of the fleet, great for parties; c) Unusual, 'has character'. Crew kept awake by screaming rows coming from next door, chainsaw-like snoring of crewmate sharing the room, and total lack of air conditioning in the height of summer; d) Crew discover kennels that they left the dog with is costing more per night than the B&B you're in.

**Race Preparation...** a) The boat is ready for you to step on board, with rigging set and sails correctly attached; b) A debate in the bar about correct sails for the conditions is concluded with the whole team heading out to the boat to prepare for the race; c) The helm has been out since the crack of dawn preparing for the race, although the crew make sure they're aboard with plenty of time to spare to untie all the granny knots, and retie the spinnaker the right way up. d) If you want to race, then you will have to make sure the boat is ship-shape, the rig is set and the sails are on - your helm will step on board (if you're lucky) just before you leave the mooring, or will expect you to do a sail past to collect him/her from the pontoon.

**At the start...** a) Perfect, right end of the line, on time and clear air; b) On time, in with the pack; c) On time, wrong club line - the boat is facing the right direction, and is in the same postcode as the start line, although the helm has been known to practise 'speed runs' from somewhere near the marina with about 30 seconds to go; d) Slightly early for tomorrow's race - just...

**At the windward mark...** a) Easily miles ahead in the lead, so loads of space and time to sort things out; b) At the front of the chasing pack. Bit tight, but a clean and relatively quiet rounding; c) Messy rounding at the back of the pack; lots of noise; temper tantrums. Awarded toys-out-of-pram trophy after race; d) Comes in from coffin-corner on port in a 100-boat fleet at the same time as 30 starboard-tackers. Crew shuts eyes and prays.

**Rules...** a) Helmsman always fair, and will not push the point, even if he's in the right. Hardly ever in the protest room; b) Helmsman usually pushing the point, but always just about stays on the right side of the rules. Seldom protests (believing it's best to hold an 'informal' protest hearing in the bar afterward) but occasionally protested; c) Helmsman believes he knows the rules, and files protests at every opportunity, wasting valuable time at the bar. Trouble is the rules he 'knows' went out ten years ago... Crew closes eyes at every mark rounding; d) Believes that he's always in the right regardless of circumstances or evidence to the contrary. On first-name terms with insurance company directors and RYA Appeals Committee.

**Picking up the mooring...** a) No matter what the wind conditions, the approach to the mooring is gentle and

controlled; b) On most occasions, the mooring is collected on the first attempt; c) The crew has been known to consider whether they will be able to catch the mooring rope tail again if they drop it, or whether they should attempt to get a turn around something and hang on in there; d) Crew knuckles drag on the ground, helms from adjacent moorings sail off to 'look at a (mysteriously invisible) heron on the shore over there' when a mooring approach is spotted to avoid vigorous fending off and gouged gelcoat.

**Repairs/replacements...** a) You would hate to see his account with the boatyard/sailmaker, as any problem is solved by giving them a ring. Of course only the latest top-of-the-range gear will do; b) Gentle persuasion is usually enough to get the offending item replaced after a couple of gentle reminders; c) If it comes to it and you are forced to buy and fit the new parts yourself you can normally get the money back without too much grumbling or blackmail; d) Items that worked perfectly last weekend will have been 'improved' in your absence so that it's either completely missing, or will fail when used. If there wasn't enough purchase on a system, you may find it re-rigged so that it is securely bolted at both ends, ensuring it will do nothing but shorten the boat. Gear failure is met with complaints about how 'the staff will mistreat the boat', followed by begging replacements from other sailors.

**In the bar...** a) You never have to buy your own beer, and is happy to chat to anyone; b) Usually buys several rounds of the beer, but will only chat to other helms; c) Grudgingly buys the first beer when finished discussing the finer topics of each mark rounding with another helm, then leaves; d) Crew always has to buy the beer, since he/she strangely never seems to have their wallet or club card.

**Nominations for the Clanger Trophy...** a) No chance - never seen to do anything wrong, despite sneaking suspicions that they're not entirely innocent; b) The odd nomination for a minor misdemeanour, but nothing too serious, and never won the bell; c) Front-runner. Non-musically able crew getting worried; d) Front-runner by Easter - no one else likely to get it this year - again!

**Summing up your helmsman:** Mostly a): The boat has probably been awarded Crews Union 'approved' status. Although your helmsman is bound to have other shortcomings, when it comes to the boat, he/she is pretty close to perfect, a good start for a shining performance.

Mostly b): Your helmsman is not too bad. Lack of funding may well prevent him/her from buying everything new each season, but you would generally expect the boat to work. Towards the end of the season, things will start looking tired, and a complete winter refit is unlikely to be forthcoming, although the essentials will probably be done.

Mostly c): Although your helmsman has a vague idea of how to treat crew correctly, he/she is still a little rough around the edges and in need of a little Crews Union 'education'. The start of a new season should be approached with caution, as forgetfulness is likely to be one of his/her key traits, so a shakedown sail is important, for no reason other than to ensure that the pole-up does actually have the

desired effect, and the chute hatch opener does. Supervision of things like putting the mast in the boat would be recommended, unless you fancy a couple of trips up the mast to retrieve lost halyards.

Mostly d:) The boat is likely to have been blacklisted by the Crews Union – contact your Crews Union representative for moral guidance. Each race should be approached with trepidation, as the likelihood of something coming off in your hands (your fault of course, even when it was being held in place by nothing more than rust and a good coating of salt), is high. Should your helmsman also be a 'fiddler' who 'enjoys' working on the boat as much or more than sailing it, you may succumb to the additional delights of the uncertainty that pulling on any rope will break something.

#### IMPORTANT NOTES

1. The above list is intended to be humorous and harmless tongue-in-cheek fun, and although individuals may perhaps be recognisable

from the descriptions above, any implication of specificity to any one person is entirely unintentional (honest). Anyone offended by anything mentioned in this list really should develop a sense of humour, but may make their complaints in writing to [editorial@crewsunion.org](mailto:editorial@crewsunion.org), or one of the appointed Crews Union representatives.

2. In the interests of harmony and editorial balance, the Crews Union recognises Dragon helmsman/owners' right to reply to this document and would welcome any submissions. Please send your proposals to [editorial@crewsunion.org](mailto:editorial@crewsunion.org), and everything deemed not to be too libellous and amusing enough will be published on the Crews Union website ([www.crewsunion.org](http://www.crewsunion.org)) and will appear on the Dragon Fleet notice board in due course.

The Crews Union also recognises that this is not a definitive list, and would welcome any additions from crew who have spotted helmsman behavioural patterns not mentioned above.

Again, send your submissions to [editorial@crewsunion.org](mailto:editorial@crewsunion.org), and an updated list will be published on the Crews Union website.

## Edinburgh Cup Format

*Peter Nicholson explains why he thinks we should revert to a six race, six day championship*

The Edinburgh Cup is the British Championship for the Dragon class and has been since it was donated by Prince Philip in 1949. It consists of six races and one discard is allowed.

Although it is not specified in the rules for the Cup, it was always understood in the past, that the races should be roughly the same length as the Olympic course had been in the days when the Dragons were an Olympic class, that is to say 10.8 miles.

I believe that this is right. The races for the Edinburgh Cup should be longer than those we sail regularly in less important weekend regattas. By making each race shorter, which is necessary if the event is to be compressed into three or four days, we reduce the status of the Edinburgh Cup and run the danger of making it mean less to Dragon sailors than many other regattas or area championships which are held each year.

Regardless of the length of the course, I also believe that for a national championship, there should only be one race per day, unless time has been lost as a result of unsuitable weather, and the only way of completing the championship is to hold two races in one day.

It is almost inevitable that if a Race Officer knows that he has to fit two races into one day, he will make his first race as short as he can, in order to allow himself time for his second. If he does set a full length first race, there is every likelihood that the time remaining for racing will be less than necessary for a second full length course, and the second race of the day will be significantly shortened.

There is another reason why I think there should only be one race a day, which is that if a boat suffered gear failure in the first race, which can only be repaired by returning to harbour, it will miss two races and, therefore, effectively ruin its chances of achieving a good result in the championship. Many people will have travelled a long way and spent a great deal of money to compete in the Edinburgh Cup, which

should be the pinnacle of their season's Dragon racing, and it seems most unfair that a gear failure, which we all suffer from time to time, that only requires a couple of hours repair, should effectively put the boat out of the regatta. One of the main reasons why a discard is allowed is to ensure that a boat which suffers gear failure should only lose one race and, therefore, still have a chance of winning the race.

I know that some people claim that they do not have the time to give a complete week to the Edinburgh Cup, but I find this difficult to believe, and I think that virtually anyone who wishes to sail their Dragon seriously and compete at international level, will be able to find a week to compete in the UK national championship.

At present we probably have too many fixtures which call themselves championships. This is partly as a result of the continuing success of the class, with a number of centres having good fleets and the wish to hold an area championship of some sort.

The entry for this year's Edinburgh Cup at only 25 was disappointing, and surely this must be due to some extent, to the fact that there are so many other attractive events in which owners are encouraged to compete, mostly at venues which are rather closer to those parts of the country which have the biggest fleets.

I think there is a real danger that if we do not differentiate the Edinburgh Cup from other events, by making it more like the UK version of the Dragon Gold Cup (although I am sure we must keep a discard), which is what it was in the past, there is a real risk that the event will attract smaller and smaller entries. With an entry of only 25 I think it is difficult to describe it as the British Dragon Championship, which I am sure we all wish it to be. I sincerely believe, therefore, that we should revert to the original format of six races over six days and ask our Race Officers to set us testing courses which are around ten miles long.

### **...the Edinburgh Cup should be the pinnacle of their season's Dragon racing**

# Learning to Race by Marriage

*Julia Bailey describes how she discovered that sailing is a matter of numbers*

When I met Graham the first thing I learned was that upwind (and, even more surprisingly, downwind) sailing was a matter of numbers. Words we had never used on the boat before like "left pressure" and "right component" became commonplace. Sensing and playing the shifts became a science through the compass and not an art through the seat of the pants.

Yes, I had been introduced to the sailing by numbers game – though not quite the numbers game the person thought who asked me why, when most of the fleet had a right fixation from the pre Worlds regatta which we had not done, we went left on a beat in Martinique and finished in the top ten in our 1985 Borresen. "The numbers looked good" I said. "You mean you saw the sail numbers of Poul-Ricard and Jesper Bank go that way?" she asked.

It gradually began to dawn on me that it was not just a question of tacking when the numbers showed the wind was starting to flick – it was a game of relativity. By analogy with painting by numbers, No 6 is sometimes dark green and sometimes light green. Much to my son's annoyance I would often answer his endless questions about life as he was growing up with "it's all relative". But in sailing it's true!

So armed, before we start, with our mean compass bearings on both tacks, here we go with a few relatives.

Fleet near you on starboard tack with wind in what you believe is the highest right phase. Position yourself, if you can, to the left of them to get the most advantage of the left when it comes. If you can't, sail fat and fast to the left to mitigate – and all of that vice versa on other tack of course.

Fleet near you under layline on way to the mark, all on same tack and opposite tack to you but you think there is more of a header to come. Go beyond and tack inside them nearer the layline or possibly even over it to pick up the best of the advantage when it lifts. You might even get more of it than they do and even those boats you went behind before tacking are toast.

However, beware of running out of runway. It is no good

carrying on in "fantastic" numbers waiting for them to crash and when they do find you are a mile over the layline.

Mr Average who thinks his compass is for when the fog comes down lays the mark perfectly having gone the "wrong" way. There is one way of mitigating this situation – sail fat and fast and roll everyone who has not yet spotted what has happened and send them off even further over the layline! But you have to be sure the numbers are not going to flick back all the way to do that.

Left numbers are advantageous when you are to the left of the rhumb line and right numbers are better to the right of the rhumb line since they present the opportunity to return to the centre of the course – but it is dangerous to become fixated with this concept since it all depends on your position relative to the fleet.

If you think there will be a lot of boats together at weather mark (particularly for example on the first beat and if there is a strong tide

setting you down to mark), consider ducking starboard tack boats if you come in near the port layline and sail fat and fast round the carnage at the mark as you approach it on starboard in clear wind.

You have gone hard left and picked up a great left shift but your alter ego has gone hard right and picked up a great right. You are both sailing fat and fast on the apparent layline to the mark with 10 minutes to go (but it feels like 100 minutes). Hold your nerve – one of you will crash first and, as Stuart Walker would say, "cross 'em if you can". But do have an eye to the other relatives above, if relevant.

There are numerous sailors out there who know all of this and lots of other relatives that have not yet dawned on me. But only a few of them sense which relative to apply when and how to factor in all the other ingredients such as pressure strengths, tide, tidal effect on wind, series risk management and changing weather patterns such as identifying when shifts are persistent and not oscillating.

On top of all that they contribute a superior seat of the pants to the science, and consistently come out in front. Maybe the rest of us should just sail by sail numbers after all.

**On top of all that  
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## JUBILEE BALL

THE JUBILEE BALL at the Four Seasons Hotel on Park Lane will replace the annual dinner next year on the 16th January – the first event to celebrate the 75th year of the Dragon and the occasion for the raffle of *Jubilee*.

# Journal of Race & Marriage

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