



The Sigma 33 'Ratty' blasts along Southampton Water – photos Christel clear.

# MDL Hamble Winter Series 1997

**Eddie Mays reports on the MDL Hamble Winter Series, the annual pre-Xmas racing that attracts some of the best sailors in the Solent. Photos by Christel clear.**

The 15th Hamble Winter Series attracted over 230 boats and was again sponsored by Marina Developments Ltd. The format of eight races remained the same, but the race management had been completely rethought and expanded since last year. For this series, the classes were split into two fleets with separate committee boats. The Black fleet consisted of the five CHS classes, the Sigma 38s and 33s, the X-99s, Folkboats and Sonatas. The White fleet was made up of the three Sportsboat classes. Their starting line was nearer the Hamble river and they had the dubious benefit, from the crews' point of view, of starting an hour earlier. The weather provided a variety of racing conditions but the unusually mild autumn enabled virtually the full racing schedule to be sailed.

Race one was sailed in northerly 18 knot winds and the Richards 36 'Full Pelt' (S. Fein) was fastest boat around the CHS 1 course but was unable to save her time on handicap against the Swan 65 'Desperado of Cowes' (Richard Loftus). This was a trend that continued throughout the series. CHS 2 saw Peter Beamish, 'Aztec', establish an early lead. He won the first three races in this class but Mark Pelling, 'Circuiteer', Chris Neil

Brown, 'Billy J Whizz', and Terry Gabriel with 'Moontiger III' were to prove very difficult to shake off and the class was not decided until late in the series.

Although the conditions in this first race were lively, the only casualty was the John Oldland Sigma 38 'Aquadanca'. They had the misfortune to cross masts with Nick Haigh's 'Steamy Windows' near the East Brambles buoy, lost their rig, in three pieces, and had to retire from the series.

**'Moontiger' and 'Billy J Whizz' battle it out.**



The start of the Winter Series coincided with the Melges 24 European championship and numbers were very small, at best only six boats raced. This decrease in the entry level followed the trend of the past years and was disappointing for the organisers who had made provision to include laid courses for the class.

The weather for the second Sunday was even better. Crews were observed in shorts – and it wasn't just the sunshine that was warm, the racing was pretty hot too. In CHS 1 Chris Jago's 'Flamboyant' and Robert Boulter's 'Thunder' could not be separated on handicap and shared third place behind Stephen James's 'Jacobite'. Finishes were also close in the Sigma 33 class. Less than a minute separated the first three boats with John Nelson, 'Shadowfax' winning. Fifth and sixth places were decided by one second with Michael Mead, 'Wozzle Hunter Too' edging out Jeremy Vines in 'Harmony'.

One of the problems in a multi-handicap fleet is deciding where to make the class band. Last year the X-332 boats were split into two classes. This year, at their request, they all sailed in CHS 3. The Sailing Instructions also allowed boats to take a higher rating in order to sail in the handicap class above. This

meant that David Murrin's sloop 'Cetawayo' and Peter Smith's Hawich Half-Tonner 'Scorpion' raced in CHS 3 and CHS 4 respectively and both were to prove successful.

Race three provided the most difficult tidal conditions so far but that didn't matter to David Aisher (Sigma 38), Ben Sharp sailing 'Rondo' in the Sonata class or Stewart Hawthorn ('Le Bouchon') in the Sportsboat class, they all recorded their third straight wins.

Early morning fog and no wind delayed the start of Race four until midday. When enough wind did arrive for racing to proceed the newly arrived Mumm 30s dominated CHS 1. Four of them led by Robert Fielder's 'Warp Factory VI' finished within 30 seconds of each other and Nigel Bramwell's BH41 'Hawk' was only one second behind. In order to ensure that all classes achieved a valid race the starting sequence was shortened by having multiple class starts. This worked well except for the Sonata class where a number of protests were brought because of the change of procedure. At the protest hearing later the committee decided that this race should be re-run for the Sonatas.

The delayed start meant that there was only time to run a shortened windward/leeward course for the Sportsboat classes. The Hunter 707s were in contention 'Bogo Pogo' (David Knight), 'Miss Money Penny' (Mike Webster) and 'Addiction' (Stephen MacAdam) were separated by two points. Stewart Hawthorn's monopoly of the Sportsboat class was finally broken by the Reflex 28 'Ocean Safety' sailed by Christian Stimson, but this was the only time Stewart was beaten in the series.



The classic Laurent Giles 'Cetawayo'.



Mike Webster's 'Miss Money Penny' leads the Hunter 707 fleet - photo Malcom Donald.



'Old Boots' and 'blowing like\*\*\*\*' were phrases that sprang to mind for Race 5. The Sportsboats and CHS5 were cancelled at 0715. At 0800 there was no wind in the river at all and by 0900, when the committee boat was experiencing 40 knots on deck, the CHS 4 class was called off. In the event, although the driving hail and poor visibility made the weather conditions foul, the big boats had a fine race. In CHS 1 the Swan 65 'Desperado of Cowes' of Richard Loftus powered round the course to have a four minute lead over Nigel Bramwell's 'Hawk' but it was Robbie Cameron-Davies (XNantor) who won on handicap. CHS 2 used the same course as CHS 1 and after 20 miles and 150 minutes of racing the J/105s of Roger Williams ('Jos of Hamble') and Terry Gabriel ('Moontiger III') were less than a boat's length apart. Although all the classes raced hard,



Desperado



The new 'Quokka'.

and the local sailmakers had extra work the following week, the only human casualty was Kian Fotherby aboard the Sigma 38 'Arbitrator'. He was swiftly airlifted off by the helicopter from Lee-on-Solent and released from Haslar the next day. The Sigma 33 fleet was again the strongest numerically and competition was always fierce. David Palmer ('Princess Jalina') had his best result so far winning by 16 seconds from Jon Perry in 'Firestorm'. Further down the class one minute covered fifth to tenth place.

Race six saw the first general recalls of the series. Both the CHS 1 and Sigma 33 classes went to the back of the queue. Peter Smith sailing 'Scorpion' in CHS 4 won his third race of the series but the strong contingent of Impalas, particularly 'Menace' (Tim Rees and Chris Smart) and Laurie Browne's 'Asterix' were always challenging and the class was not

decided until the final race.

David and Sheila Lippold sailing their Sonata 'Dry Red' had a good day. They won both the rerun of Race four and the day's Race six. Mike and Emma Jaffe, 'Sonic', were only able to sail the final two races of the series and they won both. However, Ben Sharp, 'Rondo', had sailed consistently throughout and took the series by one point.

The combination of low tide and mainly south-easterly wind led to some congestion between classes in Race seven. In particular, downwind CHS 5 boats found themselves crossing the path of reaching CHS1 boats. 'Olivia Anne IV' (Messers Hawkes, Mansfield and Barker) won her second race in succession and put pressure on CHS 5 leader John Humphries sailing 'Min-O-Din'. In the event 'Olivia Anne IV' could only manage sixth place in the final race and 'Min-o-

Din' took the class victory by one point.

The one-design classes all showed slight increases in numbers over last year with the exception of the Folkboat class. The steady decline of recent years continued and as just four boats raced their status as a separate class will be reviewed for next year. Richard Donald in his father Malcolm's 'Celia Mary' finished the series just ahead of Colin Dobner sailing 'Hannchen'. Elsewhere, Patrick Blake sailing 'New Reflex' recorded six wins for a perfect score in the X99 class and David Aisher with 'Yeoman XXVIII' counted five wins and one second.

The Sigma 33 class had over 30 entries in the series and wins in Races six and seven by Doug Harckham, 'Auditrac' gave him a slight edge going into the final race. This was won by Jack Kelly, 'Moonshine', but Doug was fifth and maintained his advantage over Jon Perry in 'Firestorm'.



The Melges 24 'Awesome'.

Three boats recorded 27 points and the tie was finally decided by Jack Kelly's fifth place in Race one. Jeremy Vines, 'Harmony', had to count a sixth place in Race two and this placed him fourth ahead of D. McLeman

CHS 3 proved to be the closest class racing. The two main contestants seemed to be swapping places throughout the series. Don Forster sailing his new boat 'Superhero' was always very near the top of the fleet and Robert Willis sailing the X332 'Cloud IX' steadily improved throughout the series but it was David Murrin's 'Cetawayo' who won by two points.

As always there seemed to be a number of new boats on display. The two

Projection 920s were regular starters in CHS 2. Peter Rutter's new Mills 36 'Quokka' competed in CHS 1 for the last three races and achieved a third place in Race seven and in the Sportsboat class it was interesting to see the Isis 21 racing against the Reflex 28 and Beneteau 25. The Melges 24s shared the same start as the Sportsboats and they seemed to have enjoyed the benefits of mixed fleet racing.

Initial feedback from the competitors is that by a combination of good weather, changes in race organisation and, probably, a bit of good luck, this series has been one of the best of recent years and continues to be the major late season event.

**Overall Results: CHS 1** (27 entries) 1st 'Desperado of Cowes' (Richard Loftus), 2nd 'X-Nantor' (Robert Cameron-Davies), 3rd 'Thunder' (Robert Boulter), 4th 'Hawk' (Nigel Bramwell), 5th 'Warp Factor VI' (R. Fieder), 6th 'Cumara' (C. Noel). **CHS 2** (25 entries). 1st 'Aztec' (Peter Beamish), 2nd 'Billy J Whizz' (Chris Neil Brown), 3rd 'Circuiteer' (Mark Pelling), 4th 'Moontiger III' (Terry Gabriel), 'Jos of Hamble' (R. Williams), 6th 'Yachting World' (Stephen Thomas). **CHS 3** (20 entries) 1st 'Cetawayo' (David Murrin), 2nd 'Cloud IX' (R. Willis), 3rd 'Superhero' (Don Forster), 4th 'Quencher' (Andrew Webster), 5th 'Djinn Seng X' (Neville Hodkin), 6th 'Prime Cut' (P. Parker). **CHS 4** (16 entries) 1st 'Scorpion' (Peter Smith), 2nd 'Menace' (Tim Rees and Chris Smart), 3rd 'Asterix' (Laurie Browne), 4th 'Hobby Horse' (Mike Fawcett), 5th 'Quango' (Kathy Smalley), 6th 'Sunny Side Up' (J. Murray). **CHS 5** (19 Entries), 1st 'Min-O-Din' (John Humphries), 2nd 'Olivia Anne IV' (Messrs Hawkes, Mansfield & Barker), 3rd 'Star-born 2' (Peter Dickson), 4th 'Odd Job' (Ray Nash), 5th 'Fourshaw' (M. Burtinshaw), 6th 'Green Kestrel' (B. Thompson). **Sigma 38** (12 entries). 1st 'Yeoman XXVIII' (David Aisher), 2nd 'Arbitrator' (Don Kennedy), 3rd 'Mefisto' (K. Susmilch), 4th 'Fat Chance' (R. Lee), 5th 'Red Arrow' (RAFSA), 6th 'Serendip' (P. King). **Sigma 33** (35 entries). 1st 'Auditrac' (Doug Harckham), 2nd 'Firestorm' (Jon Perry), 3rd 'Moonshine' (Jack Kelly), 4th 'Harmony' (Jeremy Vines), 5th 'Offbeat' (D. McLeman), 6th 'Shadowfax' (John Nelson). **X99** (8 entries). 1st 'New Reflex' (Patrick Blake), 2nd 'Last Orders' (John Shorrock), 3rd 'NeXt Jeckyll' (Andrew McIrvine), 4th '3 Espresso' (Egan, Mansell). **Sonata** (10 entries) 1st 'Rondo' (Ben Sharp), 2nd 'Dry Red' (David & Sheila Lippold), 3rd 'Fat Hen' (Robin & Caroline Nixon), 4th 'Spirit' (David Franks). **Folkboat** (4 entries) 1st 'Celia Mary' (Richard Donald), 2nd 'Hannchen' (Colin Dobner), 3rd 'Tutter' (Stuart Murray). **Hunter 707** (30 entries) 1st 'Bogo Pogo' (David Knight), 2nd 'Three Little Pigs' (N. Roberts), 3rd 'Addiction' (S. MacAdam), 4th 'Miss Moneypenny' (Mike Webster), 5th 'Take the Weather' (John Calascione), 6th 'Great White Hunter' (W. Ashton). **Sportsboat Rules** (20 entries) 1st 'Le Bouchon' Cork 1720 (Stewart Hawthorn), 2nd 'Ocean Safety', Reflex 28 (Christian Stimpson), 3rd 'Mad Cow' Bull 7000 (D. Baker), 4th 'Hullabuloo' Bull 7000 (P. Allen), 5th 'Fizzy Pop' Cork 1720 (K. Gaston-Parry), 6th 'Jack the Boat' Projection 762 (Projection Yachts). **Melges 24** (6 entries) 1st 'Awesome' (D. Sherriff), 2nd 'Behaving Badly' (Hughes), 3rd 'Barbarians at the Gate' (S. Simpson).