

An MDL of a series!



For eight consecutive Sundays in October and November hardened big boat racers flocked to Hamble River SC on the south coast to compete in what has become the country's premier cold weather series. Sponsored by Marina Developments Limited (MDL), the series acts as a magnet for race addicts, old hands and upstarts. In this special feature we bring you a round-up of the overall series, the story of the crucial final race and interviews with some of the leading figures. Photos by **Christel clear**.

Over 200 yachts participated in the MDL-sponsored Hamble Winter Series, which is now largely seen as the UK's leading big boat frostbite series. Sailors were treated to fierce but generally

friendly competition in six one-design and six Channel Handicap (CHS) classes. There were new classes for X-99s, Folkboats and J/24s (although turn-outs were small) and the inaugural HRWS sportboat class attracted a bevy of boats

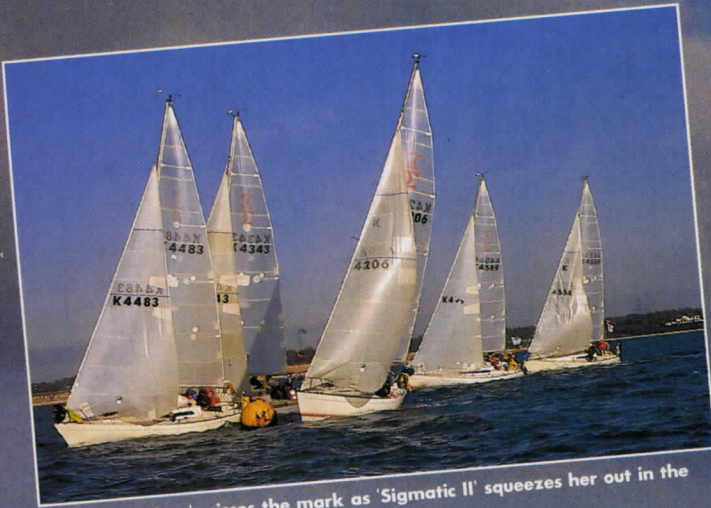
including J/92s, Hunter 707s, Bull 7000s, Cork 1720s and other racers including the Projection 762. With the level of interest currently being shown by both owners and crews in the 22-25ft range who knows how many of the other sportboats will be

'Hobo', sixth in CHS 6.



'Redcoat III', second overall in the Sigma 38 fleet - photo Tini Gerdson/Christel clear.





'Powder Monkey' misses the mark as 'Sigmatic II' squeezes her out in the Sigma 33 fleet.



'Ronstan' leads overall CHS 1 winner 'Xnantor' in race one.



able to muster a full one-design class for 1996. We'll just have to wait and see.

As in 1994 there was a dedicated one-design class for the grand prix level Melges 24, and skippers of the calibre of class national champ Mike Lennon, former Olympian Keith Musto, sailmaker Ian Pinnell and south coast expert Chris Little illustrating the depth of talent currently racing in the Melges this class.

Racing conditions varied little and generally it was bright sunshine at the beginning of the series (those shorts/T-

shirts got one last outing in race four), there was virtually no wind in the sixth and the rest of the time light to moderate winds and overcast skies were the order of the day. On the whole, meandering high pressure areas contributed to the light southerly airflow. Some of the estimated 1,100 plus sailors who raced would have liked more testing conditions, however, most accepted that the lighter winds/strong tides put a premium on Solent tactics, with the emphasis firmly on good starting, navigation, tidal knowledge

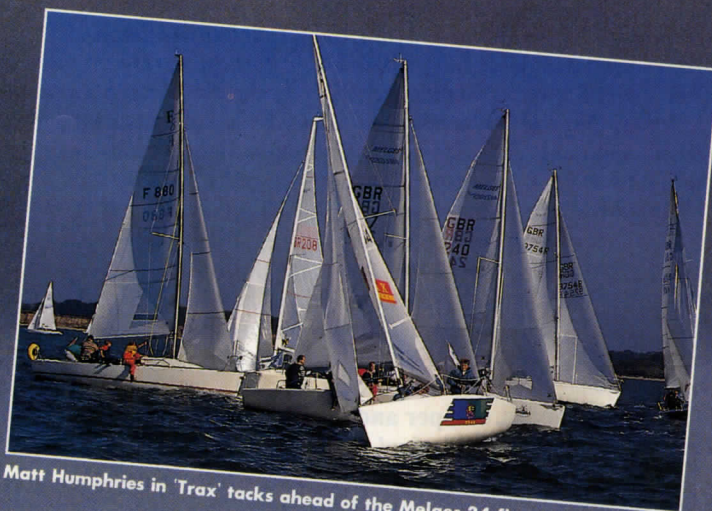
and optimum boatspeed, rather than crew weight/strength.

Breakages were few and far between which allowed owners to concentrate on winning rather than worrying about how they'd pay for broken gear. Meanwhile, all that could be heard ashore was the gnashing of sail/sparmakers teeth. Light airs just ain't good for business!

This year, the series was further improved, by the race organisers decision to clearly define the differences between Category A and Category B. Problems at



Projection 762 'Kiss the Pink', second overall in the sportboat class.



Matt Humphries in 'Trax' tacks ahead of the Melges 24 fleet in race one.



last year's series which focussed on boat names and whether some of these names (close to those of sponsors) infringed category A regulations. Hamble was determined not to stir up this hornet's nest again and in the end it was a case of All Quiet on the Category Front.

The first weekend's racing was bright and warm with a light southerly breeze. Participants made the most of the Indian Summer and racing, perhaps due to the skill-honing effect of the long hot summer, was generally extremely close.

A few early leaders served notice of what their rivals could expect, especially Whitbread Round the World Race skipper Matt Humphries sailing 'Trax' in the Melges 24 class. Matt signalled his determination in the opening rounds and even second placed Peter Morton in 'Return to Zenda' could not touch him off the start line. David Aisher's mastery of the Sigma 38 class (in 'Yeoman XXVIII') was obvious from day one... in fact he won the first four events of the series and completed the entire HRWS with a points

score of just 5.7 - a full 28 points in front of J. Driver's 'Redcoat'.

In Class 1 Robbie Cameron Davies' IMX-38 'Xnantor' pulled out all the stops while Peter and Judy Rutter's Half Tonner 'Quokka' took the opener, but then had to suffer a transom-only view of David Duffin's 'Fast Track' (Jeanneau Sunfast 32) which took six firsts in the series and finished with a perfect 0.0 overall score.

The second weekend saw yachtsmen struggling against all day flood tides which

Although I've cruised for a long time, first to the Med in 1971, I've always been a cruising man who has *done a little racing on the side*. That's why I bought "Madog", but I've become more and more interested in racing. "Madog" is the kind of yacht which performs well across the entire wind range; she only really lost out on light weather reaches where the lightweight asymmetrics went past us.

I think that one of the keys to success in this type of regatta is local knowledge. I had some really good sailors aboard the boat and they knew the Solent like the back of their hand. Y&Y's John Heyes acted as crew boss and helped keep the key people involved, even arranging for Graham Bailey to drive on the two occasions when I wasn't able to steer.

Huw Alban Davies, skipper and owner of the CHS Class 2 winning boat 'Madog' (X-332).



made navigation a nightmare. Tim Rees's Hunter Impala 'Menace' took Class 4 from Patrick Pym's HB31 'Rooster' and the eventual winner of the class, 'Polly' (another Impala) this time owned by Jamie Wilkinson and Philip Meakins.

The third Sunday was a continuation in the warm and windless saga with a sou'sou'westerly struggling to make it to Force 2. In the sportboat fleet John Waugh's 'Corker' showed that the Cork 1720 one-deign is no slouch by taking the race from Norman Harrington's J/80 'Just in Time', with the Hunter 707, 'Miss Money Penny' (Mike Webster) third.

A mini battle was brewing in the popular Sigma 33 class where M. Mead's 'Woozle Hunter Too' took the race from the eventual series winner, John Perry's 'Firestorm'.

One-and-a-half knots of tide during the fourth weekend made starts difficult to judge and pushed some Class 1 boats over the line leading to a general recall in the class. But the lesson was well learnt and the other helmsmen/tacticians took heed... there was only one premature starter in the rest of the sequence. Race honours in Class 2 went to the top placed yacht, Huw Alban Davies' X-332 'Madog' which was enjoying quite a scrap with Stuart Brackley's Stephen Jones' 320 'Reaction 3' and R. Davies' 'Another Cunning Plan'.

In the Folkboat series 'Gremlin's' (John

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1st Class 1 CHS IMX 38 XNantor

1st Class 2 CHS X-332 Madog

IMX 38
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(for the best series-produced yacht in CHS) **and**
CLASS 1 CHS Illingworth Cup
Xnantor (R. Cameron Davies)



Photo: Andy Hind

OTHER RECENT RESULTS.....

NIOULARGUE GRAND PRIX

Channel Handicap overall:

1st X-412, 2nd X-442, 3rd X-512

IMS overall: 1st X-512

SPI OUEST REGATTA: 1st X-332

RORC Cowes-Weymouth

2nd X-302 Hex

IMS EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP '95

1st overall IMX 38 Blue Sim

DAIKIN BIG BOAT CUP 1st IMX 38



X-332

the newcomer turning heads

See the **IMX 38** and the **X-332** at the London Boat Show in January along with the **X-302**, **X-362** and the **X-382**.

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Entries for the 1995 series were up by 16 per cent which is extremely promising for the future of winter racing at Hamble. The club tried to improve its professionalism this year and our promotional literature for the series, I believe, helped make the entry so strong. From a personal point of view I'd have preferred more breeze, but you can't have it all and the splendid weather at the start of the series did get everyone on the water nice and early.

'One area that the club has been looking at is holding sportboat midwinter events in conjunction with the series. This year it was the Melges Midwinters, but we're willing to look at any other proposals that are made.

'There was only one major hiccup this year (the "disappearance" of the Class 2, 3 and X-99 class buoy Daks-Simpson in race five) but that was pretty much beyond the club's control. In the end we managed to give these classes a replacement race which put the matter right.'

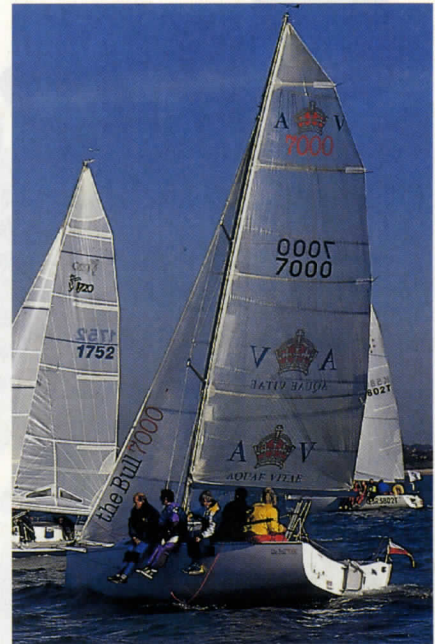
Jonty Sherwill, outgoing HRSC commodore

Tufnell) dominance seemed to slip for a moment allowing Richard and Edward Donald's 'Celia Mary' to reach the line first. 'Next Jekyll' (Andy McIrvine) gave the others a chance in race four, but his overall 0.0 series score shows that crew's foot was not off the pedal for long.

Halfway through a faultless series the Gremlins realised they risked 'downsizing' unless a spanner was thrust into the cogs. This they accomplished with guile, instigating a mix-up between the organising club and the Solent Cruiser Racing Association; the SCRA mistakenly removed the Daks-Simpson buoy from its usual position near the Island shore (a couple of miles east of Cowes). Race five was a frustrating experience for all in

Classes 2, 3 and the X-99 fleet; with Daks-Simpson missing there was nothing to do other than turn around and head home. Happily for these classes, there was time for a re-run of the race, so everyone in the series finally counted the full six from eight races. Winners in the other classes included Gregor Logan's 'Highlander' in the Sigma 38s, Stephen Thomas's 'Kissing the Pink' (Projection 762) and Richard Hawkes' 'Olivia Anhe IV' in Class 5.

Races 6 and 7 passed without major incident and, again, without much breeze either. Close competition throughout the series meant that the final weekend was the decider, at least for the second and third slots, in several classes. 'Pinnell &



Bax' (last year's Melges overall series winner) and Humphries' 'Trax' in the Melges 24 class, and 'Redcoat III' and 'Yeoman XXVIII' in the Sigma 38s scrapped all the way to the final finish.

The overall results for the MDL Hamble Winter Series make fascinating reading. It's clear that the calibre of competition is climbing steadily which accounts for the participation of such well known names in the series.

Commenting after the event, Mike Tufnell, MDL's managing director, said: 'This series has certainly been the most

'Powder Monkey' tries to port tack the Sigma 33 fleet. The overall winner was John Perry's 'Firestorm'.



successful to date. Competitors have genuinely enjoyed themselves and the competition has been of a consistently high standard throughout the series. I am delighted that MDL has had the opportunity to host the series for a second successful year and I look forward to our continued association for years to come.'

**Final Race Report
Sunday November 26**

The MDL Hamble Winter Series concluded on Sunday November 26 with the eighth and final race in the series. Channel Handicap Class 1 and the Sigma 38s abandoned racing, but then restarted after a light southerly breeze swung to the southwest and the race officials altered the course to take advantage of this new breeze.

All the starts were very competitive as the leading boats covered their rivals, trying to maintain any advantage, or make up lost ground in the fickle startlight breeze. A slightly port end favoured line encouraged the braver sailors to try and cross the fleet, but without much success. As might be expected, given the conditions, there were few surprises in the finishing order, with the best crews again scoring highly. 'Garretty' pipped Robbie Cameron Davis' 'Xnantor' in Class 1 while in Class 2 A. Webster's 'Quencher' (fourth overall) scored her first individual race victory of the series. David Duffin's 'Fastrak' continued her domination of Class 3 with another win (making six firsts in total) and in Class 4 'Polly' (J. Wilkinson) made it four series firsts. J. Gray's 'St Jarna' (placed fourth overall) snatched race victory in Class 5. The usual suspects found their names to the front of the one-design classes too, although in the Folkboats C. Dobner's 'Henchen' was victorious for the first time in the series.

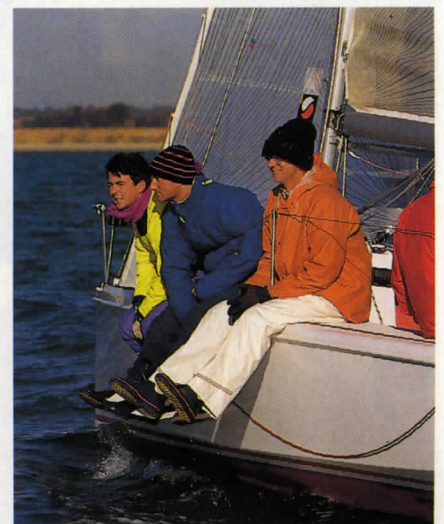


The old and the new - Folkboat 'Celia Mary' and Hunter 707 'Entertainments Committee'.

● At the start I was quite sceptical about the sportboat class - I was worried that it would just pull a few competitors away from the other classes. However, the turn-out was brilliant and the concept certainly seemed to work well. We thought that the committee might set windward/leeward courses to give some wild reaches, but in the end our courses were generally more Olympic-style than anything else... which suited our crew and the J/92 which is a relatively heavy, old boat. We've been racing "Just Midnight" for three years now and have things pretty well sorted out.

Some of the sportboats in our class were very new with the crews obviously still getting to grips with them. No doubt the competition will probably be even hotter in the spring...●

David Cable, owner of the J/92 'Just Midnight' which took the sportboat class by more than 13 points.





R Cameron Davies' 'Xnantor', winner of CHS 1.

● We're delighted with the way that the series progressed this year. Although it was a fairly *quiet* series (without too much of the frostbite element) everyone seemed to enjoy the racing which is what really counts. As far as I know, average race turnouts this year were in excess of 200... last year the average was in the region of 180.

I'd like to see the event continue to grow and to see the quality of racing higher in some classes. I believe that the event is well placed to serve as a perfect training ground for those crews working up towards the big spring and summer competitions. ●

Geoff Houlgrave, marketing manager of Marina Developments Ltd.

Results Race Eight: CHS Class 1:

1st 'Garretty' (J. Garrett), 2nd 'Xnantor' (R. Cameron Davis), 3rd 'Expedite' (J. Eldridge).

CHS Class 2:

1st 'Quencher' (A. Webster), 2nd 'Sunbeat V' (W. Courtney), 3rd 'Lohengrin' (T. Rose).

CHS Class 3:

1st 'Fastrak II' (D. Duffin), 2nd 'Quokka' (P. Rutter), 3rd 'First of April' (I. Miller).

CHS Class 4:

1st 'Polly' (J. Wilkinson), 2nd 'Rooster' (P. Pym), 3rd 'Menace' (T. Rees).

CHS Class 5:

1st 'St Jarna II' (J.G. Gray), 2nd 'Olivia Anne IV' (C. Hawkins), 3rd 'Slingshot' (D/R. Barr/Newman).

CHS Class 6:

1st 'Shallot' (M. Moody), 2nd 'Minifred' (R. Swinney), 3rd 'Hobo' (G. Morris).

Sportboats:

1st 'The Big Bull' (N. Hartog), 2nd 'Kiss the Pink' (S. Thomas), 3rd 'Just Midnight' (D. Cable).

Sigma 33:

1st 'Moonshine' (J. Kelly), 2nd 'Honey of Bosham' (D. Palmer), 3rd 'Shadowfax' (J. Nelson).

Folkboat:

1st 'Henchen' (C. Dobner), 2nd 'Columbine' (A. Hartley), 3rd 'Ayesha' (T. Steer).

J/24:

1st 'Tiger' (J. Anderson), 2nd 'Jeepers' (P. Owen), 3rd 'Jukebox' (M. Gabriel).

Melges 24:

1st 'Pinnell & Bax Sails' (P&B), 2nd 'Boulder' (C. Little), 3rd 'Trax' (M. Humphries).

Sigma 38:

1st 'Redcoat III' (J. Driver), 2nd 'Arbitrator' (D. Kennedy), 3rd 'Solent Plexus' (B. Bilderbeck).



Overall Results (Six Races Counted):

CHS Class 1: 1st 'Xnantor' (R. Cameron Davis), 2nd 'Garretty' (J. Garrett), 3rd 'Ronstan Series 75' (A. Steward), 4th 'Jump the Gun' (I. Hawthorne), 5th 'Expedite' (J. Eldridge), 6th 'High Jinx' (M. Mayne), 7th 'X-Communicate' (L. Sandison), 8th 'Boystorous' (C. Hall), 9th 'Full Pelt' (S. Fein), 10th 'Bradamante' (T. Baret). **CHS Class 2:** 1st 'Madog' (H. Davies), 2nd 'Reaction 3' (S. Brackley), 3rd 'Another Cunning Plan' (R. Davis), 4th 'Quencher' (A. Webster), 5th 'Djinn Seng X' (N. Hodkin), 6th 'The Red Dragon' (A. Cox/Cook), 7th 'Dansos' (D. Lewis), 8th 'Lohengrin' (T. Rose), 9th 'Sunbeat V' (W. Courtney CBE), 10th 'Pughahone' (R. McClement). **CHS Class 3:** 1st 'Fastrak II' (D. Duffin), 2nd 'Quokka' (P. Rutter), 3rd 'Ace' (J. Layfield), 4th 'First of April' (I. Miller), 5th 'Platinum' (T. Platt), 6th 'Roller Skate' (S. Merry), 7th 'Harlequin' (P. Halliwell), 8th 'Tangent Minus 1' (P. Aisher), 9th 'Cetewayo' (D. Murrin), 10th 'Local Hero II' (D. Forster). **CHS Class 4:** 1st 'Polly' (J. Wilkinson), 2nd 'Rooster' (P. Pym), 3rd 'Menace' (T. Rees), 4th 'Restless' (M. Fawcett), 5th 'La Nef III' (J. Noe), 6th 'Maybe II' (C. Broadbent), 7th 'Tearaway' (M. Banfield), 8th 'Sunny Side Up' (J. Murray), 9th 'Gillaroo' (T.

Taylor), 10th 'Chrysalis' (A. Pollard).

CHS Class 5: 1st 'Scorpion' (P. Smith), 2nd 'Slingshot' (D/R Barr/Newman), 3rd 'Olivia Anne IV' (C. Hawkins), 4th 'St Jarna II' (J. Gray), 5th 'Needlework' (R. Zenthon), 6th 'Anne Louise' (P. Slimming), 7th 'Min-o-Din' (J. Humphries), 8th 'Odd Job' (R. Nash), 9th 'Green Kestrel' (B. Thompson), 10th 'Sunmaid VI' (R. Stedman). **CHS Class 6:** 1st 'Shallot' (P. Moody), 2nd 'Minifred' (R. Swinney), 3rd 'Waylander' (P. Hagen), 4th 'Hobo' (G. Morris), 5th 'Filo' (A. Hill), 6th 'Tiger Rag' (K. Vasey/Tyler), 7th 'Fat Hen' (R. Nixon), 8th 'Shamm' (S. Russell), 9th 'Double Trouble' (E. Smith). **Sportboats:** 1st 'Just Midnight' (D. Cable), 2nd 'Kiss the Pink' (S. Thomas), 3rd 'Jouster' (G. Addis), 4th 'Armchair Theatre' (Heys & Moon), 5th 'Jaguarundi' (B. Bolton), 6th Premier Cru' (T. Richardson), 7th 'Entertainments Committee' (P. Poland), 8th 'Bongo Pongo' (D. Knight), 9th 'Miss Moneypenny' (M. Webster), 10th 'Corker' (J. Waugh). **Melges 24:** 1st 'Trax' (M. Humphries), 2nd 'Pinnell & Bax Sails' (P&B), 3rd 'Return to Zenda' (P. Morton), 4th 'Pigs Eye' (A. Evans), 5th 'Eurole' (C. Stobart-Hook), 6th 'Boulder' (C. Little), 7th 'Flyby' (J. Fulford), 8th 'Jaqui' (J. Gormley), 9th

'Raw Hyde' (M. Lennon), 10th 'Hooked on Speed' (K. Musto). **Sigma 33:** 1st 'Firestorm' (J. Perry), 2nd 'Moonshine' (J. Kelly), 3rd 'Woozle Hunter Too' (M. Mead), 4th 'Auditrac' (D. Harckham), 5th 'Shadowfax' (J. Nelson), 6th 'Offbeat' (D. McLeman), 7th 'Powder Monkey' (R. Goddard), 8th 'Honey of Bosham' (D. Palmer), 9th 'Harmony' (J. Vines), 10th 'Sigmatic II' (D. Bonner). **Sigma 38:** 1st 'Yeoman XXVIII' (D. Aisher), 2nd 'Redcoat III' (J. Driver), 3rd 'Highlander' (G. Logan), 4th 'Dabula Manzi' (A. Maguire), 5th 'Arbitrator' (D. Kennedy), 6th 'Red Arrow' (A. Waddell), 7th 'Protem' (J. Bradney), 8th 'Pavlova III' (F. Walker), 9th 'Prophet' (G. Snowdon), 10th 'Solent Plexus' (B. Bilderbeck). **Folkboat:** 1st 'Gremlin' (T. Tufnall), 2nd 'Ayesha' (T. Steer), 3rd 'Celia Mary' (R. Donald), 4th 'Columbine' (A. Hartley), 5th 'Hencher' (C. Dobner), 6th 'Tutter' (S. Murray), 7th 'Cidron' (R. Walters). **J/24:** 1st 'Tiger' (J. Anderson), 2nd 'Jukebox' (M. Gabriel), 3rd 'Jessica Rabbit' (G. Shorrocks), 4th 'Chaotic' (G. Hardwick), 5th 'Jeeppers' (P. Owen). **X-99:** 1st 'Next Jekyll' (A. McIrvine), 2nd 'Possessed' (M. Moloney), 3rd 'Sceptre' (A. Rayner), 4th 'Xcaliber' (G. Gibbons), 5th 'Exile' (P. Morton), 6th 'Jarrah' (C. Rouhaud), 7th 'Reflex' (P. Blake).



D Duffin's 'Fastrak II', first in CHS 3.

FACTBOX

Largest class: Sigma 33, 40 entries.

Smallest Class: J/24, 5 entries.

Best overall score: David Duffin's 'Fastrak II', total series points: 0.

Total Series entry: 238.

Total number of sailors (approx): 1,100+

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