

## Stride Treglown Welsh Topper Open Race Report

By Magnus Handley, Queen Mary SC

We arrived at the picturesque Llandegfedd sailing club on a warm but windless Saturday morning for the Stride Treglown Welsh Topper Open with the prospect of a postponement if the wind didn't build. After the briefing we waited for the wind to fill in along the valleys at the end of the lake and stabilise.

On the course it became clear that the shifts would be what would decide the racing, as the wind would flick around the landforms surrounding the reservoir and present large shifts. In the first race a strongly starboard biased line meant that by being first off the line on the committee boat end I was first at the top mark and went on to win despite briefly being overtaken by Ollie Vowles and then regaining the lead. The second race of the day was won by Duncan Lloyd Evans, who got a good start and then retained a commanding lead for the remainder of the race, followed by me and then Mary Tilling. This was to be the last of the day as the wind died again and it was getting late.

At the end of the first day I was leading the 5.3 fleet, followed by Duncan and Ollie. The surprise leader of the 4.2 fleet was my younger brother Bjorn, who being the smallest sailor on course (but probably the loudest) had managed to overtake the majority of the fleet on the downwinds and secure two second places.

Forecasts had indicated that the second day would bring more wind, yet this was not to be, as it brought yet more light and shifty conditions. Mastery of these gave victories to Duncan Lloyd Evans and Ollie Vowles respectively, putting Ollie into the lead before the final race as Duncan and I had both been caught on the wrong side of the course at points during the fourth race and ended up with results of 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> respectively. Into the final race it was still very much undecided and no one could afford to mess up as we had all used up our discards at some point in the regatta.

Given my anxiety going into the last race I had managed to start my watch a minute early and so managed to go at the one minute signal. I briefly thought I'd got the best start ever, and it took me a little while to realize no-one else had started. I was only saved by this race not being started under black flag. I crossed the line heading downwind just as the horn sounded, line sag allowing me to sail on top of some of the fleet but under the line to rescue my start from potential disaster. I reached the top mark in third but on the next beat managed to anticipate the shifts better than Ollie and Duncan who decided to beat a long way out to the left and suffered when a large starboard shift allowed me to take the lead, followed closely by Lowri Boorman and Mary Tilling, with Duncan and Ollie coming 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. I was somewhat relieved when the wind then completely died, leaving me the overall winner.

In the 4.2s, Thomas Willet from Llangorse SC had a really good second day, coming back from 5<sup>th</sup> place overnight to win overall, followed by Iolo Davies in 2<sup>nd</sup> and Daniel Cleary in 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

Many thanks to all of those at beautiful Llandegfedd sailing club for hosting a fantastic event and making us all feel very welcome, even those like me who aren't Welsh. Thanks also to Stride Treglown and Lennon Racewear for the great prizes and making the event possible. Even though I may not still be in toppers next year, my little brother will definitely come back to such a wonderful and friendly event.