



IRISH SCHOOLS TEAM **RACING ASSOCIATION (I.S.T.R.A.)**

The Leinster Schools Team Racing Championships

21st April 2024

Hosted by Royal Saint George Yacht Club
(the “Organising Authority” in association with I.S.T.R.A.)

Race Report

The Irish Schools Team Racing Association (ISTRA) Leinster Championships took place on Sunday 21st April 2024 hosted by the Royal Saint George Yacht Club. A nervous organising committee greeted the arrival of a much-awaited high pressure to Ireland on the Sunday morning with fantastic sunshine but no or very little wind. A two-hour postponement was posted and as forecast the wind came in on-time for racing to commence just after 11.30.

The event had 16 teams from 12 schools around Leinster giving a total of 96 sailors plus substitutes on the water. A Team Racing event is quite different from a fleet racing event. Competitors do not need to bring their own boats, but instead swap out of different boats throughout the day. Each team consists of three boats with a helm and crew per boat so 6 people on a team. The RSGYC has two flights of team racing boats, Firefly's and used another flight of boats on loan from the Trinity College Dublin. Each flight of 6 boats have two different colours to help distinguish the teams. This makes for a spectacular and colourful sight of the event taking place in-front of the club. There are a lot more races at a team racing event than a fleet racing event with often over 100 races a day being completed. The race area is small with the average race taking around 10 minutes and can be viewed from the club or the East pier.

The format for the event was a Swiss League leading to knockout stages. While the wind was consistent in direction, it fluctuated up and down and caused the race committee to postpone for short periods.

However, the sailing conditions were perfect for team racing with the teams able to demonstrate their sailing tactics, mark traps, boat handling and working as a team. Each round consists of 8 races with a tiebreak mechanism to rank the teams accordingly. After two rounds of racing, the top four teams consisted of Mount Anville, St Conleth's, St Andrew's 1 and Wild card (which was a combination of sailors from Clongowes, St David's and Temple Carraig who were not able to form a full team of their own). As the rounds progress, the racing gets more challenging as teams are pitted against teams of similar ability and with similar number of race wins or losses. After four rounds, the top four were consistent performers with Mount Anville and St Conleth's on 4 wins from 4 races and St Andrew's 1 and St Michael's 1 on three wins from four races. Blackrock were unfortunate to be in 5th place with two wins from two having been beaten in earlier rounds by Mount Anville and St Conleth's. Holy Child Killiney had a strong showing early on but suffered defeats from St Andrew's 1 and Blackrock.

The race committee decided to move to the knock-out stages after the 4th round as concerns for the wind holding out. In the first semi-final, St Conleth's faced St Michael's 1 and two thrilling races saw St Michael's qualify for the final. St Andrew's 1 squared up against Mount Anville for the 2nd semi-final and went ahead 1-0 after the 1st race. The 2nd race was as close as they come with the race been decided on the 5th and 6th place position. It was so close even the competitors weren't sure of the result until the finish boat confirmed St Andrew's 1 as the winner and the 2nd qualifier for the final.

The third-place playoff took place between Mount Anville and St Conleth's which saw Mount Anville snatch victory on the last beat to the finish and take third overall. For the 1st race of the final, St Michael's 1 took a close win to go ahead 1-0. St Andrews 1 dug deep from their experience and managed to win the 2nd final race leaving a do or die final race to decide the Leinster Champion. Both teams displayed fantastic tactics, sailing ability and superb boat handling ability with St Andrew's 1 emerging as victors and being confirmed as Leinster Team Racing Champions 2024.

The National Schools Team Racing Championships now take place in Bantry Sailing Club over the weekend of 4th and 5th May with a total of 20 teams qualifying from around the country. Leinster have an allocation of 8 teams to qualify and the Leinster Championship is the deciding ranking for teams. Therefore, the following teams have qualified to enter the Irish Schools Team Racing Championships:

- St Andrew's 1
- St Michael's 1
- Mount Anville
- St Conleth's
- Blackrock
- St Andrew's 4
- Holy Child Killiney
- Wild Card

The RSGYC is known as the premier club for hosting high quality team racing events and the next major team racing event to be hosted will be the George Invitational on the weekend of the 25th and 26th May. Details of entry (including for youth teams) can be obtained by contacting the RSGYC. Further details can be seen [here](#). Other team racing in May is the Cannonball trophy, a team racing event for Dragons held on the 18th and 19th May. The largest youth sailing event and largest team racing event in Ireland is the Elmo Trophy organised by the RSGYC and will take place this year on 31st August and 1st September with over 200 youth sailors scheduled to compete.