

James and I arrived on Saturday at our first Fireball event together since 2017, keen to get any time on the water we could before the Nationals.

We were greeted by a free cuppa, blue skies, a steady 10 knots across Poole Harbour, and a very welcoming Adam and Tracy Deary who introduced themselves as the local talent. The forecast for weekend was to have the best conditions on Saturday and very light winds on Sunday. That being the case, the Poole Race Team advised they'd be aiming for four races on the Saturday with the hope of getting two in on Sunday.

Sailing in the stretch between Brownsea and Round Islands on a flooding tide, protecting the left was key. However, patchy and shifty conditions left anyone the chance of making gains (or losses..) wherever they were on the course.

Race One - we took the pin end and headed out left hand side keeping Derian and Andy on our right-hand side. A loose cover saw the two of us hardly separate for the next 45 minutes!

Race two - Again we took to the left and thought we were looking strong. D & A took a lovely shift to reach the first windward mark first. A position they held until they realised they'd missed the spreader mark on the run. After a hasty kite drop and beat back up to the mark put them back in the mix with the rest of the fleet.

Race three - Derian and Andy weren't making the same mistake! They took another lovely shift in the middle of the first beat to lead all the way around.

Race four- The breeze freshened to a good 15 knots bringing back the memories of how brilliant Fireballs are to sail! We took advantage of the pressure and managed a clean race from the gun.

After free tea and cake, the Fireball & Osprey sailors adjourned to the balcony to sample the local Dorset beers.

Sunday dawned with a 1-hour postponement as we looked over a glassy smooth marina and mist covered bay. Whilst we sat on the balcony bathed in sunshine a boat whispering session was going on in the dinghy park. Like a switch at 10am, the mist lifted and a steady (ish) 9 knots rolled in across the bay. A quick change and we were out for an 11:30 start for two 1-hour races in sun and 10 knots of breeze.

It was a fantastic weekend that made us really realise how much we'd missed sailing in this fleet. Roll on the Nationals Brightlingsea!

A huge thank you to Gul Watersports for sponsoring the Gold, Silver & Bronze fleet winners, and to Poole YC for such a friendly welcome and for running a really great event. We hope to be back next May for more!

1<sup>st</sup> Gold Fleet – Rick Cornes & James Goodfellow

1<sup>st</sup> Silver Fleet – Barry Smith & Ricky Spring

1<sup>st</sup> Bronze Fleet Graham Wilson & Peter Warne