

Daisy Pulls it Off

Waldringfield has produced its fair share of National Champions but probably none as exciting as Daisy Collingridge. She cut her teeth in the WSC Cadet class and is now the Laser Radial National Champion after a tight week of racing at Weymouth in August against some of the best singlehanded sailors in the country! She has followed up this success with an amazing result in the European Senior Championships in Bulgaria, winning one race and finishing seventh overall against the hottest of European female sailors.

She is now preparing for the World Championships in December, in the unfamiliar waters of Oman. The club is massively proud of her achievements... so far.

After a brief flirtation with the 420 class, sailing with Willow Bland, Daisy recalls her first proper experience of a Laser, sitting with Pip Dearlove on the bow of Charlie Dearlove's boat. They were planing at top speed on a wild Waldringfield afternoon... a 'poop poop' (Toad of Toad Hall) moment which led her to muscle her way into the RYA Transition Squad. She remembers struggling at first to rig a Laser and she spent much of the winter swimming in the



All photos: ILCA

murky depths of Weymouth Bay. Little did she know that, some years later, this would be the scene of her latest championship triumph.

Daisy's first goal was to make it as one of the top two girls in the Youth Squad. This was no mean feat in itself, involving massive commitment and hard graft, in a mixed group of highly competitive and determined youngsters. She admits to being terrified of the boys in her first couple of training squads but at her first international event, the Europeans in Poland, she finished 11th in variable conditions which she likens to Waldringfield.

Ironically her main competitor within the Squad,

and now a good friend, Matilda Nichols is a member of Aldeburgh YC. One point separated the two girls in the Youth Worlds in Medemblik which Daisy then followed up with a tremendous bronze medal in the ISAF Youth Olympics in China. There was no great pressure on her at the time and no particular expectations. Sleeping on the floor of the airport was an inauspicious start to the event but Daisy sailed each race as it came



and carved out a consistent set of decent results.

At this point she was in her last year of school, squeezing in her revision for 'A' Levels whilst being encouraged by her coaches to press on with the goal of qualification for the British Sailing Team. Team selection opened the door to a measure of funding from UK Sport, based on

results and with intensive training for two weeks every month. Portugal was chosen as an ideal training camp as it was cheap for accommodation and allowed for interaction with other national teams, including a Danish laser superstar Anne-Marie Rindom, who Daisy singles out for inspiration: 'She is quite simply fast all the time, always knowing where to go and what to do... she just makes no mistakes!'

Daisy admits to liking the windier conditions now, particularly as she is probably the fittest she has ever been, with regular trips to the gym. This involves a mix of strength-and-conditioning work and time on her bike, which has helped to increase her base level of fitness. A strength-and-conditioning coach has taught her how to use the gym equipment to maximum effect, and she now has the power in her legs to hike for England... literally. Her victory in the ILCA6 (Radial) National Championships in



Weymouth was the culmination of a rigorous training regime. Although the points were tight, Daisy led the results for the whole week but picking up a 'U' flag (premature start) halfway through the week did not make for an easy finish in a one-discard event. Scoring a 4th in the penultimate race and a 2nd in the final race was enough to give her the title against the best Radial sailors in the country.

Daisy puts her success down to spending a huge amount of time on the water. Luckily the structure of her degree course at Bath University allows her to do this. The Psychology Course she is sitting involves minimal contact hours with recorded lectures and assignments which she can undertake around her sailing. At the same time as studying how the human mind works, she is learning the finer points of sailing a Laser fast; how to read the conditions, make a race plan and develop a strategy which also involves some

classroom work in Weymouth. Her coach, James Gray, who was originally with the Laser boys, has a keen eye for detail, and Daisy recognises the value of a post-race debrief which her supportive parents will undoubtedly have encouraged in her Cadet days.

The Club is privileged to have such a talented sailor amongst its competitive ranks and we all wish Daisy every success in what will be an exciting few years ahead of her.

Patrick Cooney

