

# Wilson Trophy, 2010 – Round-up

*from Justin Chishom*

The annual Wilson Trophy British Open Team Racing Championship hosted by West Kirby Sailing Club is a remarkable event on many levels. Beyond the mere facts that the event, now in its sixty-first year, is still consistently attracting the cream of the international team racing community, the sheer logistical challenges of staging this event set it apart from any other. Thirty-two six person teams, more than three hundred individual races to be started, finished and accurately scored, an instant online results service, a fleet of evenly matched colour coded Firefly dinghies to be rigged, launched and maintained throughout the regatta, on the water judging from a team of twenty-five international umpires who had collectively travelled more than seventy-thousand miles to attend, live expert commentary on the action and lakeside grandstand seating to cater for the spectators. Sixty-one years of experience counts for a lot however and year after year the willing and unfailingly enthusiastic team of West Kirby Sailing Club continue to deliver a superb regatta.

The 2010 edition of the Wilson Trophy which ran from the 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> May was no exception and attracted team entries from the UK, Ireland and the USA. The West Kirby Hawks fielded the same illustrious helm lineup of Ben Field, Dom Johnson and Andy Cornah, which had prevailed over the American Larchmont team in a thrilling 2009 Grand Final. Whilst the Hawks certainly looked likely to be strong contenders to make it into the final rounds come Sunday, another local team, West Kirby Sailing Club, also boasted an impressive list of experienced team racing helmsmen, in the form of Leo Dixon, Paul Kameen and Owen Modral and would be equally likely to progress to the later stages of the competition. Four potent USA teams had made the trip to this year's Wilson Trophy, including two New York Yacht Club entries, as well as Team Extreme led by Olympic 470 campaigner Stuart McNay. This year also saw the welcome return of the enigmatically named Woonsocket Rockets who made a huge impact at the 2009 edition. Ireland was represented by two strong Dun Laoghaire teams, the Royal St George Yacht Club and the George Knights.

During two days of non-stop Swiss League qualifying rounds, many teams topped the leaderboard at some point, but by far the most consistent overall was the American Team Extreme, who ultimately qualified for the knock out stages in first place. Joining them in the quarterfinals were the West Kirby Hawks, the Royal St. George YC, the George Knights, Wessex Exempt, New York Red, West Kirby Sailing Club and the Woonsocket Rockets.

In front of a packed grandstand, the best-of-three quarterfinals produced some truly superb team racing which saw both the two local teams, West Kirby Hawks and West Kirby Sailing Club, qualify for a local derby semi-final showdown. The other equally mouth watering semi-final matched Team Extreme and New York Red against each other in a star-spangled shoot out for a place in the Grand Final.

Having won the first race of the American semi-final, Team Extreme then took early control of the second with a beautifully choreographed team start. Their advantage was soon further enhanced by a penalty awarded against the race leading New York Red boat, for an illegal mark trap attempt at the first buoy. Despite fighting back hard for the rest of the race, the New York Red sailors never really recovered from this setback and Team Extreme were able to close out the match two wins to nil.

West Kirby Hawks also won their tense local grudge match against West Kirby Sailing Club by two races to zero. West Kirby Sailing Club didn't go down without a fight however and turned the second race into the team racing equivalent of a western bar room brawl. All six boats were locked in a melee of high-speed team racing manoeuvres for the entire race, with the advantage swinging backwards and forwards on each leg. It was not until the final stages of the last beat that the West Kirby Hawks eventually prevailed, to take their second win of the semi-final and secure a place in the Grand Final.

The best of five Grand Final was decided in three straight races, with Team Extreme simply demonstrating more composure and better discipline than their British challengers. A series of uncharacteristic unforced errors by the West Kirby Hawks, including several OCS starts and a clutch of umpire penalties, effectively handed control to team Extreme in all three races and enabled them to

inflict a clinical three to zero Grand Final whitewash defeat on the 2009 Wilson Trophy winners. Having so dominated the qualification rounds and maintained their composure through the elimination rounds nobody could argue that Team Extreme - Zach Brown & Emmet Smith, Adam & Melanie Roberts and Stuart McNay & Abby Coplin - were well deserved winners of the 2010 Wilson Trophy British Open Team Racing Championship.

Other trophy winners:

Under 21 Eric Twiname Trophy – The Hilbre Highlanders

Wilson Plate (awarded to best team outside the quarterfinals) – The Hilbre Highlanders

Joyce Evans Memorial Trophy\* (awarded to best crew as voted for a panel selected from organisers and competitors) - Debs Steel - West Kirby Hawks

\*This is a new trophy donated by New York Yacht Club in memory of Joyce Evans, née Uren, who died last month aged ninety-seven. She was one of the West Kirby Sailing Club's real characters and sailed in numerous Wilson Trophy events, including the first one in 1949.

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