

DUNHILL ROYAL LYMINGTON CUP MATCH-RACING CHAMPIONSHIP 1980

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Match-racing ace Dick Deaver looked unbeatable with a five-out-of-five score at the beginning of the second day of the Dunhill Royal Lyminster Cup match-racing championships (9th/10th May), and onlookers were complaining that nobody was a match for the American helmsman. Then local skipper George Tinley, called on as reserve at the last minute when Chris Bouzaid cried off, beat him fair and square, and threw the competition wide open.

Now Deaver, John Oakeley and Irishman Harold Cudmore had each lost one match. And two of Britain's might-have-been Olympic helmsmen, Phil Crebbin and David Howlett, were close on their heels with two matches down apiece.

But then Oakeley, skipper of the twelve-metre Lionheart, lost his match with Cudmore, and after that everything hinged on the Cudmore-Deaver contest in the penultimate round.

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In the pre-start manoeuvring, the initiative went this way and that, but Cudmore had the advantage at the gun, and rounded the windward mark 39 seconds ahead. Deaver inched closer throughout the two-lap course, but he never broke through, and finished 19 seconds after the Irishman. Cudmore only had to hold his own against Guy Gurney in the last round to win. Which he did.

The series was a triumph not just for Harold Cudmore, but for the sport of match-racing. In almost ideal conditions, the ten competitors duelled with one another in turn, sailing carefully-matched OOD 34s round a short sharp course unaided and unhindered by chance or any differential in boats and gear.

The event was organised as usual by the Royal Lymington Yacht Club, which this year for the first time had the backing of tobacco company Alfred Dunhill.

Before the draw, in which the borrowed OODs were allocated to the competing helmsmen, it seemed as if the competition was doomed to mediocrity, when not only was Chris Bouzaid unable to come, but Dutchman Tjerk Romke de Vries (helmsman of the twelve-metre Windrose) also sent his regrets. And to deepen the gloom, Harold Cudmore was without his tactician, Andy Rose.

However, there were points of interest. The organisers had elected to extend the pre-start manoeuvring time from five to ten minutes, to bring the series into line with other match-racing events round the world. The course was to be in Christchurch Bay, where the tidal current is less fierce and more evenly distributed than in the Solent. And two of the invited helmsmen were dinghy aces with little or no experience of yachts: Cathie Foster (Women's World Double-Handed Champion), and Paul McNamara (who, with his crew from the Grimsby and Cleethorpes Sailing Club, won the 1980 RYA team racing championship).

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McNamara and his band failed in the event to win a single match, though they beat Barrie Perry, Harold Cudmore, Guy Gurney and John Oakeley at the starts. As one might have expected, tactics were no problem for the team racing dinghy champions; big boat spinnaker handling was.

It seemed as if everything was a problem for Barrie Perry, who had been invited to participate as a result of his appointment as Lionheart's reserve helmsman at the beginning of the year. He lost all his starts, and only won one match (against McNamara). During the week following the Dunhill Royal Lympington Cup, he resigned his position aboard Lionheart

John Oakeley himself made one or two mistakes, the most noticeable of which was also the most surprising in that he made exactly the same mistake at the same competition last year: he failed to pass through the starting line at the end of the first lap. His opponent in the match, David Howlett, also failed to pass through it, and both boats rounded the windward mark before the crews registered their mistake. Then each followed a different course of action. John-O decided he had to correct the mistake by 'unwinding', and he retraced his track back round the windward mark and outside the starting line before passing through it and setting out correctly on the second lap. Howlett decided the windward mark was irrelevant since he had failed to pass through the starting line, so he did not 'unwind'. At the protest meeting, the jury decided in favour of Howlett.

A number of other protests were made and heard during the two-day contest, but only one result on the water was reversed by a decision in the protest room, and this was a simple port-and-starboard case between George Tinley and David Howlett.

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Reserve helmsman George Tinley competed once before in the Royal Lyminster Cup, and is the local X One-Design Class match-racing champion. But Bill Green, the man who introduced this kind of racing to Britain, told him before the series: "George, we need you as cannon fodder."

After Tinley's coup in his match against Deaver, Bill Green's voice was heard across the water "Cannon fodder rules," was all it said.

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