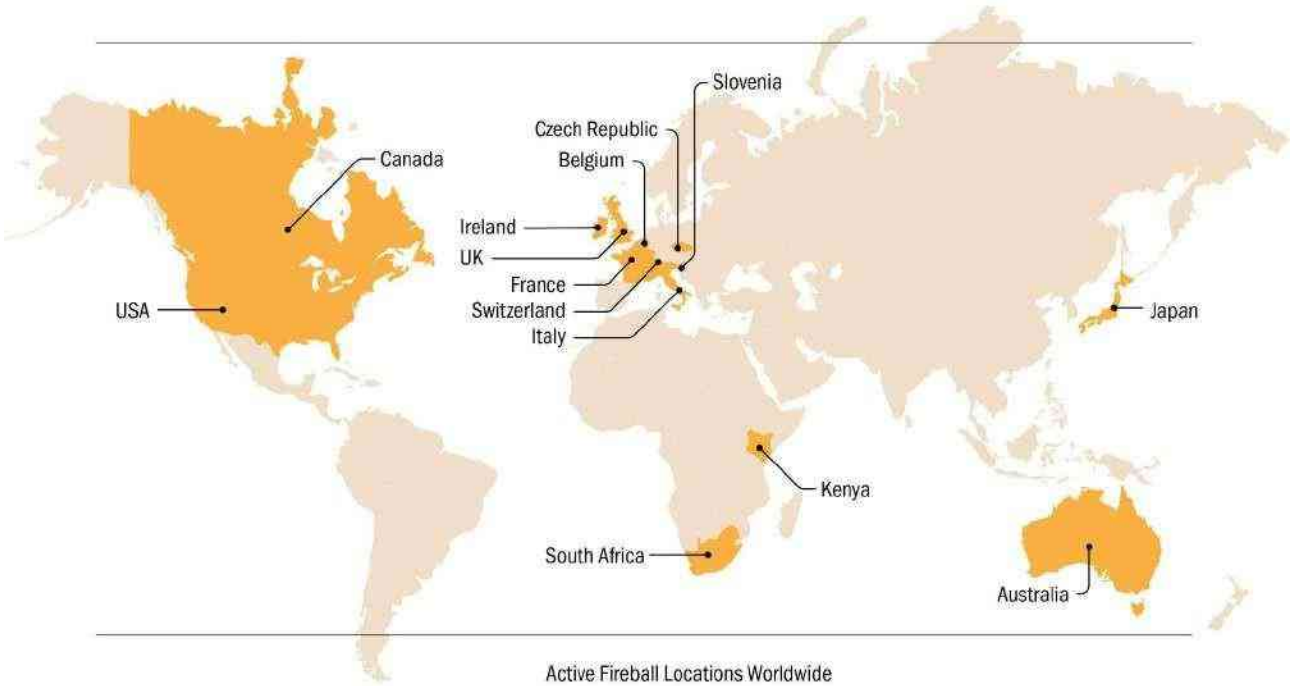
Annual Report 2025-26



Active Fireball Locations Worldwide

Table of Contents

Commodore's Note **3**

NCA Reports **4**

Belgium 4

Ireland 8

Switzerland 11

Japan 15

Australia 17

Canada 20

Czech Republic 23

France 25

Italy 27

Kenya 31

Slovenia 34

United Kingdom 37

United States 43

South West United States Region: A resurrection story. 44

Commodore's Note

I have just taken the time to read through the reports in this yearbook, and I am amazed at how much has been going on at the National and local level of the class. A recurring theme is the efforts to encourage young sailors into the class, and for any NCA that is having problems attracting the younger sailors, there is a wealth of ideas and suggestions here to help you out. We all know that young sailors bring passion and enthusiasm and this is obviously a foundation for growth. I would like to congratulate and thank all the NCA's for their efforts in making the class what it is today.

Looking back at 2025, I feel it was a year of development and change. It started in February with the launching of the new deck design of the "Windermark" Fireball, the culmination of many years' work by the chair of our Technical Committee, Dave Hall, to move the design forward. This resulted in 15 new boats registered, when only 3 new boats had been registered in the previous 4 years. Whilst this doesn't match the early days when over 1000 boats were being built every year, it is certainly a big improvement. Dave Hall should be congratulated by everyone for all his hard work, and the FI Council recognised this at our AGM last year by awarding him an honorary life membership - not just for the new boat, but for all the efforts he has put in to support the class over nearly 40 years..

From my perspective, the other major highlight of the year was the spectacular world championship that we held at Circolo Vela Arco, on the amazing Lake Garda. This brought over 130 Fireballs to a single starting line, and the images and videos from the event show just how exciting it was. The results were dominated by two boats, who were separated by less than a point before the last race. In the end, our congratulations went to the Swiss crew of Yves Mermod & Maja Siegenthaler, who won the last race, and commiserations to the UK crew of DJ Edwards and Vyv Townend. I would also like to congratulate the 134 other entrants who turned up and made it such a great regatta.

Looking forward, the Executive has been working on parts of the strategic plan[1] developed a number of years ago. This includes forming the Marketing and Fleet Development committee, who have collected and curated multimedia for the class and delivered this yearbook. I must thank Heather Macfarlane for taking this on. We have also put together a slate of championship events to set the hearts racing. At the moment we have World championships pencilled in all the way out to 2031, with European championships in 2027 and 2028 as well. We are busy nailing down the dates, and so you can pencil them in your calendars. I look forward to seeing all my Fireball friends at all these events, providing, of course, the old body holds up.

Happy Fireballing

Nick Rees

[1] https://www.fireball-international.com/the-class/strategic-plan/

NCA Reports

Around the world there is a mix of local competition and participation in national and international events. Check out these reports from different countries where fireballs are being sailed.

Belgium

Fireball Belgium - Rising from the Ashes: Annual Report 2025-26

Author: Jules Orlent - NCA MFDC Representative and NCA President

Date: 28 April 2026

Introduction

After nearly disappearing during the COVID-19 pandemic, Fireball sailing in Belgium has experienced a remarkable renaissance. What began as a cautious experiment in late 2024 has blossomed into one of the most exciting comeback stories in Belgian dinghy racing. This report outlines our journey, current status, and ambitious plans for the future.

The Comeback Story



Antwerp - November 2025

In late 2024, with Fireball sailing at its lowest point in Belgium, we decided to organize a training session to gauge whether there was still life in our class. The response exceeded all expectations: **12 boats showed up**, and the enthusiasm was palpable. Everyone was excited to sail a Fireball again, and it became clear that the passion hadn't died—it had simply been dormant.

Building on this momentum, we established a full race and training calendar for 2025. Participation gradually increased throughout the season, and we welcomed **6 new boats** to the fleet—a remarkable achievement that demonstrated the class's enduring appeal.

New Leadership, New Direction

In September 2025, our members voted in a new organizational structure to formalize our revival:

- **President:** Jules Orlent
- **Treasurer:** Piet Vermeiren
- **Secretary:** Thomas Vermeiren

This team immediately set to work creating an ambitious calendar for 2026, featuring **10 events in Belgium**—a schedule that would have seemed impossible just 18 months earlier.

A Historic Milestone

March 2026 marked a watershed moment for Belgian Fireball sailing: **official class recognition by Belgian Sailing was approved**. This is a huge step forward, providing us with legitimacy, support, and access to resources that will be crucial for our continued growth.

Current Fleet Status

Today, the Belgian Fireball fleet stands at approximately **20 boats**, with **17 boats actively participating in events**. Event participation varies between 5 to 12 boats, depending on location and conditions. We've also benefited tremendously from support from neighboring countries, particularly through exchanges with the French fleet, which has helped create a broader community and more competitive racing.



Plate taille - March 2026

2026 Growth Initiatives

To maintain our momentum, we've launched several key initiatives:

1. **Class Boat Rental Program:** We've purchased a class boat that can be rented per season or per event, lowering the barrier to entry for potential new sailors.
2. **New Website:** A modern online presence to improve communication and showcase our vibrant community.
3. **Professional Training:** A training event in May with a professional trainer to help sailors improve their skills and competitiveness.
4. **Nationals at Sea:** Taking our championship racing to coastal waters for a new challenge.
5. **General Season Ranking:** A year-long ranking system to stimulate participation across multiple events and reward consistency.
6. **Youth Recruitment:** We're actively targeting Cadet and Europe sailors, encouraging them to make the switch to Fireball as their next step in dinghy racing.

A Healthy Second-Hand Market

One of the most encouraging signs of our fleet's vitality is the **revival of boat rotation**. We're now seeing established teams upgrading to newer boats, which brings their older boats onto the second-hand market. This rotation completely died before COVID but is now living again—and we believe it's vital for the long-term health of our class.

This natural cycle gives younger teams the opportunity to buy very affordable boats and enter the class without prohibitive costs. **Composite Winders have proven to be excellent boats for starters**, as you can find them well-equipped for below €2,000—a very acceptable price point that makes Fireball sailing accessible to a broader audience.



Composite winders for the win! Here "Young Guns"

So far, we haven't seen any new Windermark boats in Belgium, although we must say that they look very tempting! Perhaps that's the next step in our fleet's evolution.

Our Growth Strategy

Our experience has taught us several valuable lessons about fleet development:

Youth is Key: Including young sailors is a winning formula for long-term fleet growth. We're specifically targeting sailors aged 25-35, who bring energy, commitment, and a long potential sailing career ahead of them.

Stable Partnerships: While boat tryouts are useful for introduction, we've learned that fixed helm-crew combinations over the season are essential for building competitive teams and sustained participation.

Feeder Classes: Our focus on Cadet and Europe sailors provides a natural progression path, as these sailors already have the skills and competitive mindset that translates well to Fireball racing.

Affordable Entry Points: The availability of well-maintained second-hand boats at reasonable prices is crucial for attracting new teams and ensuring the class remains accessible.

Looking Ahead

Our immediate goal is to add **another 3 boats this season**, which would bring our active fleet to 20 boats—a comfortable number for competitive racing and sustainable events.

Beyond numbers, we're focused on **creating a sustainable organization** that doesn't rely on any single individual. Building depth in our leadership and volunteer base is crucial for long-term success.

Most excitingly, we're working on **finalizing Belgium's bid to host the 2028 European Championships in Medemblik**. Hosting a major international event would be the ultimate validation of our comeback and would inspire another generation of Belgian Fireball sailors.

Conclusion

The revival of Fireball sailing in Belgium demonstrates what's possible when passionate sailors come together with clear vision and sustained effort. From 12 boats at a training session to official class recognition and 20 boats in just over a year, we've proven that the Fireball spirit is alive and well in Belgium.

The journey continues, and we invite sailors from around the world to join us on the water and be part of this exciting chapter in Belgian Fireball history.

Jules Orlent
President, Fireball Belgium NCA
MFDC Representative

For more information about Fireball sailing in Belgium, upcoming events, or our boat rental program, please visit our new website or contact us directly

Ireland

The Fireball Fleet in Ireland

by Neil Cramer, chair Irish Fireball Association 11.04.2026

Class Growth

The class in Ireland has grown enormously in the last few years and has recently been awarded ***Class of the Year*** by Irish Sailing. The boost has been largely thanks to hosting the Fireball World Championship in LDYC Dromineer in 2022 which attracted quite a few young sailors into the fleet. In particular the class has developed a symbiotic relationship with the 420 class in Ireland. This has been a boost to both classes. It provides the 420 class with a clear pathway for those youth sailors coming to the end of their 420 careers, whilst offering the Fireball class an opportunity to bring new, younger, experienced and competitive sailors into the fleet.

Young Sailors

Currently, there are some 40 Fireballs in Ireland with young sailors wishing to purchase 2nd hand boats when they become available at a good price. The price factor is a big issue for young sailors and the class is hoping that as sailors trade up, affordable boats will trickle down into the hands of new younger sailors. The sweet spot in terms of pricing for this cohort is a boat that is old but quite sailable for around €2,000. At the upper end of the scale two new Windermark boats have already been bought by Irish sailors. The class holds at least 5 regional events each year with average participation of 15 – 22 entries. The annual Nationals & Youth Nationals attract about 26 entries. The Irish Fireball Association subsidises entry fees and Fireball membership for youth and student sailors and this has a positive effect, increasing participation at our main events.

Training and local competition events

In tandem with most of these local competitions, the class organises pre-event training sessions under the tutelage of top Irish and International coaches with the emphasis on boat handling, tuning, and speed tips. The class also has good club racing in Dun Laoghaire under the DBSC banner and at Monkstown Bay SC in Cork, as well as participation in PY club racing at clubs across the country. Even in winter strong fleets participate in race series at both the Dun Laoghaire DMYC Frostbites and Monkstown SC Frostbites.

International event participation

In 2025 Irish entries to the Fireball Worlds in Lake Garda numbered 11 boats which was the highest Irish representation at a Worlds in 20 years. At the 2025 Fireball World Championships at Lake Garda the Irish youth duo of brothers Daniel and Harry Thompson claimed top prize as winners of the Fireball Youth World Champions. They were subsequently selected for the Irish Helmsman's Championships via the Presidents Selection. The 2026 World Championships being held in Torbay in the U.K. in July will see another large contingent of Fireballs travelling from Ireland to participate in these geographically accessible championships. And on the further horizon there is a very attractive World Championships scheduled for Kilifi in Kenya in February 2028. This has created much chatter amongst the fleet here in Ireland with advance plans afoot to somehow bring a decent Irish contingent to the event which although remote promises both great sailing and a great holiday.

Conclusion:

To summarise – in Ireland we strongly believe that getting new younger sailors into the fleet is vital for the fleet both here and internationally and we have been doing as much as possible with our resources to encourage this.

Link to Irish events in 2026 - https://fireball-ireland.com/events/

Photos courtesy of **Bob Bateman**. Cork, Southern Ireland, off Cobh during the Munster Championship hosted by Monkstown Bay SC which is now the fastest growing club with a fireball fleet on the island. 1. Start; 2. Top mark; 3. Close up on Reach 1; 4. Reach 2.









Switzerland

Swiss Fireball Report — Marketing and Fleet Development Committee

by Tobias Frey (Swiss Fireball Media/Communications) 20 May 2026

1. Introduction

Good news first: Switzerland is home to the current European (Claude Mermod & Ruedi Moser) and World Champions (Yves Mermod & Maja Siegenthaler) in the Fireball class, which says a lot about the level of sailing we've got here. The season is busy, with 10 to 12 regattas spread across the country from spring to autumn, and distances between venues are short enough that most events are within a three-hour drive. Membership is holding steady, and junior numbers are actually ticking upwards, which is encouraging. That said, like most dinghy fleets, we're not without our challenges. This report gives a straightforward picture of where Swiss Fireball stands right now — what's working, what we're up against, and where we see room to grow.

2. Current Fleet Status

We've been putting real effort into making the fleet accessible, especially for juniors. All entry fees for Swiss Cup regattas — including the Swiss Championships — are fully covered for junior sailors. It's one of the most concrete things we can do to lower the barrier and show that we're serious about bringing young people into the class.
On the charter side, we now run one regatta-ready rental boat (down from two). Sailors who use it and take part in Swiss Cup events get a portion of the costs back, which helps make the numbers work for teams who aren't ready to buy their own boat yet.

2.1 Challenges

An Ageing Fleet

A big chunk of our active sailors is around retirement age. They're still going strong on the water, but we can't count on that forever — we need younger teams coming through. Finding them is the tricky part. Dinghy sailing in Switzerland is generally on the decline, and we're actually the last two-person adult dinghy class still running a proper national championship and a full season of racing beside the junior classes 29er (growing) and 420 (declining). On top of that, wind on Swiss lakes is patchy and lake-dependent, which isn't always the most appealing training environment. A lot of younger people are gravitating towards things like wing foiling instead — it's more spontaneous, you can do it on any body of water with wind, and you don't need a crew.

Quagga Mussels and Lake Transfers

For the past 1.5 years, moving a boat between Swiss lakes has come with extra paperwork and cleaning requirements, due to regulations aimed at stopping the spread of invasive species — the Quagga mussel being the main concern right now. There are some allowances for regatta and training travel, but the mandatory cleaning procedures still apply and add real time and effort to cross-lake sailing. We're in ongoing contact with the relevant authorities to try and make the process as smooth as possible for our members, but it's a hurdle that's not going away anytime soon.

Getting in Front of New People

We're pretty sure there are sailors out there — and people who've never sailed at all — who would love the Fireball if they ever got a chance to try it. The problem is reaching them. We've been building up our Instagram and Facebook presence, with the idea that visibility is the first step. Whether it actually turns into new teams on the startline, we'll see — but it's the best tool we have right now. Whenever someone shows interest, we try to get them out on the water as quickly as possible — either crewing with an experienced sailor or joining us at a regatta to see what it's all about.



Swiss Nationals Silvaplana 2024 ©Urs Härdi



Paola and Marco Swiss Nationals Neuchatel 2025 ©Urs Härdi



Racing at Lake Neuchatel in 40 knots ©Urs Härdi



Multi-national event: Swiss Nationals Neuchatel 2025 ©Urs Härdi

Getting More Teams to International Events

Only a handful of Swiss teams regularly make it to events like Ski Voile in Antibes or the Europeans and Worlds. The reasons we hear most often: the travel, the time off work, unfamiliar (often windy) venues,and the risk of spending a whole day stuck in general recalls. We haven't cracked this one yet. One idea we're trying is giving international events more airtime on social media — showing what they actually look like and hopefully making them feel less daunting, especially for younger sailors who might be on the fence.

2.2 Opportunities

Plenty of Racing

The Swiss Cup runs from April to November with 10 to 12 events around the country. The calendar is lined up as well as we can manage with the international schedule, so teams who want to build towards Europeans or Worlds have a clear path. Rankings are based on each sailor's six best results, and we give out prizes for the top six overall, the most active member, the most active junior, and the best mixed team. There's something to race for at every level.

Sharing is Caring

The fleet has always had a pretty open culture when it comes to sharing knowledge — tuning tips, tactics, rig settings, you name it. It happens on the water, on the website, and in our quarterly Gazette, which has been running for 60 years and has the full back archive online. For teams who are still finding their feet, this makes a real difference. And when everyone is sailing faster, the racing gets better for everyone.

Port Camargue and Mammern

The annual training week in Port Camargue, France is a highlight of the Swiss Fireball year. Usually 10 to 15 teams make the trip down to southern France for a week of salt water sailing, often with proper breeze. It's great preparation for anyone heading to international events, and it's also just a brilliant week away together as a fleet.

Back home, the training weekend in Mammern, Switzerland offers a more relaxed setting for individual coaching — useful for teams who can't get to France or just want some one-on-one time with experienced sailors.

An Olympic Team Racing with Us

One of the best things to happen to the Swiss fleet recently is having an active 470 Olympic campaign team joining us on the start line for big events. They won the Swiss Championships in 2025 (and will compete again in 2026) as well as the Worlds in Arco in 2025. The knowledge they bring — especially around equipment and tactics — is genuinely invaluable, and their energy lifts the whole fleet. They've also helped with fleet visibility, and it's thanks to their personal recommendation that we found a new team for our rental boat this year.

Class Rental Boat

The charter boat isn't a magic solution for fleet growth, but it's a useful tool. It gives newcomers a way to get into the class without buying a boat straight away, and it's great to see other national fleets starting to think and work along the same lines.

Media and Visibility

Social media has become our main channel for getting the word beyond just our members. During the World Championship on Lake Garda, our daily posts were reaching close to 5000 people. And when Yves Mermod & Maja Siegenthaler won the Worlds, the national and international press coverage that followed — helped along by our press release — was a boost for the class. Without the imagery by Urs Härdi who has photographed countless Fireball events in the past decades, all this media work would be impossible. His archive is open for everyone, other NCAs included, have a look at it: https://www.vet-sailing.ch/Fireball.

3. Conclusion

The interesting thing about our situation is that boats aren't the limiting factor — it's teams. That's a slightly different problem from what a lot of fleets are dealing with, and it shapes how we think about what to focus on. Getting younger sailors interested and committed is the big one. It's not easy: dinghy racing asks for a fair amount of time and dedication, and there's a lot of competition from activities that are easier to pick up and put down. We're working on it, but we don't have all the answers yet.

The next few years are going to tell us a lot about where Swiss Fireball is headed. We're keeping at it, trying things, and staying optimistic.



Incredible scenery, Swiss Nationals 2026: © Peter Kupferschmied



And the downwind view, Swiss Nationals 2026: © Peter Kupferschmied

Japan

Sun, Sea, and Cold Beers: Looking Back at Fireball Japan 2025!

Author: Hiroshi Kato

Hello fellow Fireballers around the world!

Our Fleet

Let's take a look back at a fantastic year of Fireball sailing in Japan in 2025. While we might not hit the water every single week, our passion is stronger than ever. Personally, I managed to get out on the beautiful waters of Enoshima at least once a month, and had a blast hopping into multiple fleet races throughout the season, including our Nationals!

Right now, our active Japanese fleet is split between two incredible coastal spots: **Enoshima** (5 boats) and **Hayama** (2 boats). Even though they are about 10km apart, we always share the same racecourse whenever a regatta brings us together. Plus, both venues are just a super easy 1.5-hour train ride from central Tokyo! If you are ever visiting Japan, you are officially invited to come and sail with us. Remember when Nick Rees dropped by a few years ago? We loved having him, and we'd love to have you too!

Our Regattas

We hosted two major official events in 2025, and they were packed with action:

- **The Summer Regatta (August):**
  Mid-August in Japan is definitely hot and humid, but the midday sea breeze never lets us down—it's incredibly steady and perfect for racing! We squeezed a thrilling 4-race series into a single day, sharing a combined start with the Tasar fleet. We had 4 Fireballs on the line, and boat **14808** took home the trophy. Even with a small fleet, the tight racing was brilliant, and honestly, the ice-cold beers after coming ashore were absolute heaven!
- **The Fireball Nationals 2025 (November 22–23):**
  After dodging a few weather delays earlier in the season, we finally gathered a full 7-boat fleet for the Nationals in late November. The racing got so intense that a slight mix-up in the points calculation led to a spontaneous, dramatic tacking duel on the water! It was high-stakes, hilarious, and pure fun.

Looking Ahead...

It's been a while since the Japanese fleet traveled to international events like the Worlds. With the weak Yen since 2022, shipping a container from Japan has become quite a financial hurdle for a 7-boat fleet. But that hasn't dampened our spirits! Some of our members are actually brainstorming creative workarounds, like purchasing a boat in Europe to keep overseas for future championships.

Even if we can't make it to the starting line physically, the Japanese Fireball community buzzes with excitement every single time the World Championship is on. We love following the action, chatting about the races, and we are counting down the days until we can rejoin the international grid.

Until then, fair winds, and we hope to see you in Japan soon!



Japanese fireballs sailing at Enoshima ©Japan Fireball Class Association

Australia

Fireball Australia Update 2025–2026

by Andrew Kean and Heather Macfarlane

Overview

While overall membership remains below the exceptional levels experienced during the 2024 World Championship year in Geelong, participation indicators suggest the class has successfully consolidated and is again showing signs of growth.

Membership

Membership increased significantly during the 2025–2026 season.

Year	Youth	Total Members	Boats Registered
2024	11	71	39
2025	9 (+6 honorary)	54	27
2026	**16 (+5 honorary)**	**66**	**33**

The increase reflects renewed growth following the peak World Championship period.

Championship Participation

Participation at national & state championships has remained relatively stable over the past three seasons.

Event	2024	2025	2026
Australian National Championship	29 (+23 from overseas)	19 (+1 from overseas)	21 (+3 from overseas)
Australian Youth National Championship	–	9	8
South Australian State Championship	8	6	7
Victorian State Championship	14	10	15

The unusually high attendance at the 2024 Australian Championship reflected its integration with the Fireball World Championship held in Geelong, Victoria. Excluding that exceptional circumstance, participation levels have remained consistent, with a modest increase evident in 2026.

International Participation

The 2025 World Championship at Lake Garda attracted 17 Australian boats, making it the largest AUS contingent ever to attend a Fireball International Championship overseas. This reflects the strength of our local fleet and the enthusiasm of members to participate in international competition, especially at more exotic venues.



There is already considerable interest in the 2028 World Championship in Kenya for another strong Australian team. This ongoing international engagement remains one of the defining characteristics of the Australian Fireball class.

Boat Ownership and Fleet Renewal

There is a healthy and active second-hand market, with 13 boats changing hands this year, continuing a positive trend following the 2024 World Championships. The combination of significant boat transfers and a high proportion of first-time National Championship competitors suggests the Australian fleet is successfully attracting new participants while maintaining its existing membership base.

Additionally three fireball owners have invested in the new design fireballs provided by Windermark. Over time this should assist with the ongoing fleet refreshment.

Australian Youth Championships re-launch 2025

Created to provide a pathway for younger sailors to enter the class, the initiative is delivering positive results. From the inaugural 2025 Youth Championships, three youth teams went on to compete in both the 2026 Australian National Championship, and their respective State Championships, demonstrating the value as a development pathway, and providing encouragement for the continued investment in youth participation initiatives as a strategic priority for Fireball Australia.

#MFSMO Social Media Campaign

Fireball Australia conducted a social media campaign **#MFSMO – More Fireballs Sailing More Often** to increase awareness of Fireball sailing, encourage greater participation, and showcase the activity and enjoyment of the class, by challenging sailors to share content on Facebook and Instagram using the #MFSMO hashtag.



Boats competing in the 2025 National Championship displaying the logo for More Fireballs Sailing More Often

The initiative successfully generated enthusiasm, increased social media visibility, and strengthened fireball community engagement. It is intended to continue the campaign next season.

Conclusion

The Australian class remains healthy and active. Membership increased, championship participation stabilised following the 2024 World Championships, while international engagement reached record levels.

Strong boat turnover, a growing youth programme, and a continuing influx of first-time National Championship competitors provides confidence that the class is successfully renewing itself while maintaining its long-standing tradition of competitive, internationally focused sailing.

Fireball Australia looks forward to building on these foundations in the coming year and continuing to contribute strongly to the international Fireball community.

Worth highlighting is that **35% of competitors at the 2026 Australian National Championship (17 of 48 sailors) were first-time Fireball Nationals participants**. That's a particularly strong indicator of fleet renewal and is unusual for a mature class.

Canada

Fireball Canada Annual Report 2025

Extracted from Fireball Canada News website and Quarterly Firebull reports

Overview

The Canadian Fireball fleet enjoyed a positive year in 2025, characterised by renewed leadership, significant membership growth and strong participation at the Canadian Championship. Despite the considerable distances separating Canada's regional fleets, active Fireball sailing continued in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.

The year also saw continued Canadian involvement in international competition and a renewed focus on Canada's potential to host a future Fireball World Championship.

Leadership and Future Planning

Eric Diller took on the role of President of the Canadian Fireball Association mid-term in 2025 and quickly became active both nationally and internationally, including representing Canada at the Fireball International meetings at Lake Garda.

The Association is supported by a strong committee, with a number of newer members taking on responsibilities from the stalwarts who have kept the Association active during and since the 2019 World Championship at Pointe-Claire, Quebec.

North American Rear Commodore Evelyn Chisholm and the Canadian Association are also encouraging members to begin considering potential venues for another World Championship in Canada. The objective is to have sufficient preparation in place should an opportunity arise to host the next World Championship outside Europe in 2031, if Japan does not proceed with a bid. Alternatively, Canada could position itself as a potential host in 2035 if the current sequence of planned Fireball International championships proceeds as anticipated.

Membership and Fleet Growth

Membership growth was one of the most encouraging developments of 2025. Boat registrations increased by approximately 60%, while sailor registrations almost doubled, including the addition of a youth/student membership.

By late 2025 the Association had approximately 50 paid-up members, its highest membership level for several years.

This growth was reflected at the 2025 Canadian Championship in Vancouver, where 17 boats gathered for three days of closely contested racing. The event brought together sailors from across the country and provided a strong focal point for the Canadian fleet. The competition is continuing strongly in 2026 with 17 boats competing in the 2026 Fireball North American Championships held June 12-14 at Wabamun Sailing Club in Alberta, Canada. For the recent Fireball Nationals, check out the YouTube video from the event.

Regional Sailing

Canada's vast geography continues to make it difficult to bring the entire national fleet together regularly. However, this challenge is offset by active regional groups in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.

British Columbia maintained regular racing throughout the season and benefited from the involvement of a number of younger sailors. Alberta had eight active Fireballs during the summer, with seven boats making the long journey to Vancouver for the Canadian Championship. Ontario maintained a smaller presence

through mixed-fleet club racing, while Quebec finished its season strongly with a Fireball clinic introducing younger sailors to double-handed sailing and participation in the long-running Screwball Regatta.

These regional fleets remain essential to maintaining regular participation and providing pathways for new sailors to experience the Fireball.

International Participation

Canadian sailors continued their tradition of international participation during 2025, with 3 teams competing at the Fireball World Championship at Lake Garda, Italy.

Canadian representatives also participated in the Fireball International meetings at Garda, maintaining Canada's active involvement in the international class. There is already considerable enthusiasm for the 2028 World Championship in Kenya, including discussion about organising a Canadian container to transport boats to the event.

This continued willingness to travel internationally, combined with renewed discussion about hosting another World Championship in Canada, demonstrates the Canadian fleet's ongoing commitment to the international Fireball community.

Communication and Class Promotion

A significant development during the year was the revival of **FIREBULL**, the traditional newsletter of the Canadian Fireball Association. The newsletter returned in 2025 and provided a regular platform for national and regional news, regatta reports, technical information, historical articles and promotion of upcoming events.

The Association also continued to develop its online communications and social media presence, helping connect sailors who are geographically dispersed across the country.

Conclusion

2025 was an encouraging year for the Canadian Fireball Association. Stronger membership, increased boat registrations, a successful 17-boat National Championship and renewed leadership all point to a class with positive momentum.

The continued strength of regional sailing remains particularly important in a country where fleets are separated by considerable distances. At the same time, Canadian sailors remain internationally engaged, with participation at Lake Garda, enthusiasm for Kenya in 2028 and early consideration of a future Canadian World Championship.

With a strong committee, growing membership and a combination of experienced stalwarts and newer sailors becoming increasingly involved in the Association, the Canadian Fireball fleet is well positioned to build on the progress made during 2025.



Photo from the 43rd Screwball Regatta in Pointe Claire on September 20, 21 2025 .
This regatta, now appropriately known as the Screwball – Peter Kelly Memorial Regatta. International competitors might remember Peter playing a key role in hosting and videos for the 2019 Fireball Worlds.



The 2025 Canadian Fireball Championships was all we'd hoped for and more at Jericho Sailing Centre, Vancouver, BC.

Czech Republic

2025-26 Czech Annual Report of the Fireball Fleet

Author: Dominik Dragoun

The Czech Fireball fleet continues to demonstrate strong activity and a vibrant community spirit throughout the 2026 season, following a strong Czech team of 15 boats in 2025 at the World Championship in Garda.

National Events

Around **20 crews regularly participate** in the Czech National Cup series, forming a competitive and dedicated core of the fleet. The season has also welcomed several new crews, bringing fresh energy and enthusiasm to the class.

In 2026, the National Cup already included **four major events** held at **Nové Mlýny, Rozkoš, Nechranice,** and **Lipno**, offering a wide variety of sailing conditions across some of the country's best sailing venues. Racing was very close in challenging windy conditions, with strong competition across the fleet. In all races, podium positions were decided with equal points.





Czech National Cup on Lake Nechranice, June 2026.

In addition to the main series, a number of traditional regional regattas take place on smaller waters across the Czech Republic, with consistent participation, such as Bolevák, Máchovo jezero, Orlík, Bezdrev, Svět, Poděbrady. Moreover, a traditional Ski-regatta with cross-country and slalom competition takes place every year in early January in Krkonošemountains. These events remain an essential part of the calendar, combining shorter, high-intensity races with a strong community atmosphere.

Current Standings – Czech National Cup (after 3 events)

1. Johanka Nápravníková Kořanová / Jakub Nápravník
2. Lucie Štursová / Dominik Dragoun
3. Jiří Parůžek / Přemysl Čechura




Czech National Cup on Lake Lipno, July 2026.

With **two major events still to come**, the overall standings remain wide open with both Czech Cup and Czech National Championship titles up for grabs.

The series will be decided in the final part of the season:

- **Autumn Czech Cup – Nechranice (September 5–6)**
- **Czech National Championship – Nové Mlýny (September 26–28)**

We would be delighted to **welcome international crews and visitors** to join us for these events and experience Czech Fireball sailing firsthand.

Beyond the racing itself, the social side of the Czech Fireball fleet continues to be a defining feature. The atmosphere is always **friendly, lively, and welcoming**, creating strong bonds between crews. Alongside their sailing talent, Czech Fireball sailors are also known for their **musical spirit**, often turning evenings into memorable gatherings filled with music and good company.

The fleet remains committed to maintaining both a high level of competition and an open, friendly environment for sailors of all levels.




Czech Ski-regatta, January 2026.

Class President: Jakub Nápravník
Author: Dominik Dragoun
Photo credits to: Eliška Kuthanová, Zdeněk Parůžek, Petr Čepela

France

Fireball France: Sailing Downwind!

Author: Claude Guérin

The Fireball class in France is going from strength to strength! While the western region remains the most active hub, the South has picked up the pace with renewed momentum, using the Mediterranean as its playground. Thanks to proximity to our Swiss and Italian friends, the number of events and members has steadily risen in recent years—including gatherings that combine sailing and skiing! A mix of generations fosters knowledge transfer, and we see sailors who raced Fireballs forty years ago returning for the sheer joy of it, sharing good times, and rediscovering the fun.

The class's revival is also due to the Fireball itself, which remains surprisingly modern and versatile compared to other boats. Lively, robust, suitable for any type of crew, and capable of sailing in diverse conditions, it is truly timeless. It's a sort of "multi-boat": multitasking and multifunctional. It draws sailors from other classes—Fireball or what? The answer is: Fireball!!

The **regatta circuit spans over 25 events**, stretching from the tip of Brittany to the Italian border. Every year at Easter, the association organizes a three-day training to shake off the winter lethargy and dust off the decks! Regattas and training sessions offer chances to share experiences and memories—often fuelled by beverages that loosen tongues. There's even one drink called "Destop." Normally, that's used to unclog... well, you know.



Ski - Sail event at Antibes 2026. Photo c/- Esteban Hernandez

Participation in the Teignouse's Cup remains consistently high. The Saint-Raphaël Regatta stands out as the year's largest event in terms of participant numbers, bolstered by Italian sailors who bring a high level of competition to the fleet. League regattas and inter-class events attract diverse entries, showcasing exactly what the Fireball is all about.



Sailors at the Teignouse's Cup

In 2026, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of a regatta unique in the world, the 3P: from Paimboeuf to the bridge and comeback.



3P anniversary 30th ! Wonderful time

We're organizing a windward-leeward course and a long-distance race in the Loire Estuary, complete with a giant paella prepared by our dedicated chef. In late July, the World Championship takes place in England—where temperatures are now (almost) on par with the Mediterranean! That's a bonus; it'll justify the bill for the beer. Not the end as we will have regattas from September to December.

Fireball sailors are also racing keelboats with incredible success—so much so that we've set our sights on taking the podium with the Fireball flag after winning the *__Tour du Finistère__* overall in 2025. We're aiming to repeat that feat this year, as well as at many other regattas.

We therefore face a dual challenge: maintaining our national momentum by building on local successes, and engaging at the European—or even international—level to help drive the class forward.



Start of a passionate sailing career with fun in a fireball -
young Rafaël Allain, helming for his father in Carnac 2018 is now 29er European Champion.

Long Life to Fireball International.

Kiss (keep it simple and sexy!)





Saint Raphaël, the location of the 2027 European Championship - to be held at Saint Raphaël, on the Cote d'Azur, South eastern France.

Italy

Extracts from Italian Fireball website and newsletters.

Fireball Italy Annual Report 2025–2026

Overview

The 2025 season was a landmark year for the Italian Fireball class, culminating in the successful hosting of the Fireball World Championship at Arco on Lake Garda.

The World Championship provided a strong focus for the domestic season and contributed to renewed enthusiasm across the class. Italian participation continued to combine experienced sailors with a growing number of younger teams entering from the 420 and other youth classes.

A comprehensive national, inter-regional and international racing programme supported activity throughout the country, while the 2026 calendar demonstrates the Association's intention to maintain the momentum created by the Worlds.

World Championship at Arco

The major event of 2025 was the Fireball World Championship, hosted by Circolo Vela Arco from 22 to 30 August.

The Championship attracted **136 boats from 14 countries**, making it one of the largest Fireball World Championships of recent years. The scale of the event confirmed both the enduring international appeal of the class and Italy's capacity to host a major international championship.



Challenging Start Line of 136 boats at Lake Garda ©Elena Giolai

The Worlds were the centrepiece of the Italian season, with the national programme structured to provide crews with a series of preparation events at varied venues and in different conditions. The Championship also provided an opportunity to promote the Fireball within Italian sailing and to strengthen relationships between the Italian fleet and visiting international sailors.

Italian Championship and National Participation

The 2025 Italian Championship was held at Sanremo from 23 to 25 May and attracted **28 boats from four countries**: 20 Italian, five French, two Swiss and one Czech.

The Championship was won by the new team of Cicconetti and Bortesi. In addition to taking the overall and Italian titles, they won the Under-25 category. Their success was particularly encouraging because they were among several teams that had recently progressed from the 420 and other youth classes.



Italian Fireball fleet in Lovere, in the highest part of Lake Iseo, for a national race - as well as the penultimate test opportunity before the 2025 World Cup in Arco.

Four other teams entering the Fireball from youth classes had joined the fleet during the preceding year. This emerging pathway represents one of the most promising developments for the future of the Italian class.

The Championship also reflected the diversity of the fleet. Dagnino and Capizzi finished second among the Italian teams, with the Ascoli brothers third. Mugnano and Kostka won the Classic category, while the all-female team of Franco and Cavallo finished seventh overall and won their category.

National Racing Programme

The 2025 programme included national regattas at Lerici, Salivoli, Lovere and Rapallo, together with the Italian Championship at Sanremo. Inter-regional events were scheduled at Desenzano, Diano Marina and Viverone, supplemented by events at Bracciano and the Italian–Swiss Championship at Maccagno.

Participation was strong at several of the principal events. Seventeen teams entered the opening National Regatta at Lerici, despite a further seven late withdrawals caused by illness and injury. Eighteen teams,

including four French crews, competed at Lovere in July. These figures demonstrate a healthy core fleet and the increasing attraction of Italian events to sailors from neighbouring countries.

The Italian–Swiss Championship at Maccagno and regular participation in French and Swiss events further strengthened cross-border cooperation.

Youth and New Sailors

Attracting younger sailors has become a significant feature of the Italian fleet's development.

The 2025 Italian Championship winners were a new Under-25 team, while several other recent arrivals had transitioned from the 420 and related youth pathways. New and younger crews have been welcomed into both modern and Classic boats, allowing sailors to enter the class without immediately requiring the newest equipment.

The Association has supported this transition through an inclusive fleet culture, advice from established competitors and opportunities to participate immediately in national and international events.

The presence of competitive younger teams suggests that the Italian class is beginning to convert the enthusiasm surrounding the home World Championship into longer-term fleet renewal.

Training and Technical Development

The Italian fleet introduced short technical briefings during national events in 2025. Following their introduction at the Italian Championship, these sessions continued at Lovere and were well received by competitors.

The briefings provide an opportunity to discuss local conditions, tactics, tuning and lessons from previous races. This initiative encourages knowledge-sharing between established sailors and less experienced teams and helps improve the overall standard of competition.

Italian events continue to place strong emphasis on cooperation ashore, with competitors helping one another with repairs, tuning and boat preparation. This combination of technical development and social support remains one of the strengths of the fleet.

International Participation

Italian sailors participated in events outside Italy, including competition in France and Switzerland, while Italian regattas regularly attracted French, Swiss and Czech crews.

The home World Championship substantially increased Italy's international engagement during 2025 and provided many Italian sailors with the opportunity to compete in a major championship without the logistical cost of transporting boats overseas.

The 2026 programme retains this international outlook. It includes the Swiss Championship at Thun, the Italian–Swiss Championship at Maccagno, the World Championship at Torbay and the Riviera Cup at Saint-Raphaël.

Women in the Italian Fleet

Women continue to play a visible role in the Italian Fireball fleet as skippers, crews, organisers and Association members.

The opening national event at Lerici coincided with International Women's Day and included specific recognition of the fleet's female sailors, known within the class as the "Firebelle". Mixed and all-female teams featured prominently during the season, including category success at the Italian Championship.

This visibility supports the Association's objective of presenting the Fireball as an accessible and inclusive double-handed class.

Class Organisation and Communication

The Italian Association maintained an active website, newsletter, WhatsApp community and event-reporting programme.

At the 2025 Association meeting in Sanremo, the President and Treasurer were confirmed in their roles, while Giovanni Dagnino succeeded Carlo Zorzi as Secretary. This leadership transition brought a younger active sailor into the administration of the class while retaining continuity within the committee.

Reports from national events consistently emphasised the importance of the class's social atmosphere. Shared meals, informal technical assistance and activities away from the racecourse continue to help retain sailors and welcome new members.

2026 Programme

The 2026 calendar provides a broad continuation of national and international activity.

Four national regattas are scheduled at Santa Margherita, Quercianella, Arco and Porto Venere. Three inter-regional events are planned at Desenzano, Lovere and Rapallo, with the Italian Championship to be held at Punta Ala in September.

The programme also includes the Italian–Swiss Championship at Maccagno, the World Championship at Torbay in July, the Swiss Championship at Thun and the Riviera Cup in France.

The geographic spread of these events—from Liguria and Tuscany to Lake Garda, Lombardy and Piedmont—should help maintain participation across Italy's principal regional fleets.

Conclusion

The Italian Fireball class emerged from 2025 with considerable momentum.

Hosting a 136-boat World Championship at Arco was a major organisational achievement and gave the domestic fleet a clear focal point. Strong participation at the Italian Championship, increased involvement by sailors from youth classes, successful Under-25 teams and growing international attendance at Italian events all provide encouraging signs for the future.

The principal challenge will be converting the exceptional energy generated by the home World Championship into sustained membership and regular domestic participation. The extensive 2026 calendar, continued international engagement, technical-development initiatives and the integration of younger sailors provide a strong foundation for achieving that objective.

Kenya

Authors: Alastair Bush and Tom Moreton

Kenya Nationals 2026

Fittingly we've just completed our 58th Nationals in Kilifi, held every year (with no gaps) since 1969 - We still race for the original silver trophy. None of our 12 entries were born when the event was first sailed, but we do our best to carry the banner forwards. With 5 sailors under the age of 25, the future of our fleet looks strong. We are adding more Fireballs, imported from overseas, to the Kenyan fleet, with two more about to join after Torquay.

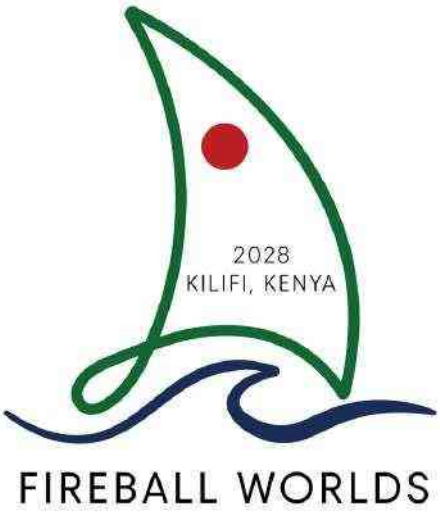


The Nationals are held on the large expanse of tidal water, inland from the Indian Ocean, known as The Bowl. We held 8 races, mostly in 14-16kn southerly wind, with a few punchy gusts (typically lurking at the gybe mark), which led to some excellent racing, and a fair share of nominations for our 'Balls Up' trophy.



1	Al Bush	Sandy Morton	Freshi	6
2	Taryn Bebbington	Joachim Bebbington	White Mischief	13
3	Chris Childs	Anika Bebbington	Sisi	16
4	Don White	Ben Playle	WhiteWash	22
5	Tom Morton	Eppie Morton	Umeme	28
6	Daniel Francis	Marcel Leahy	Sure Thing	33

Kenya Worlds 2028



Preparations are well underway for the World Championships in February 2028. We will be running the event from Mnarani Beach Club, where the event was held in 2003. There will be a fantastic atmosphere, with many activities being arranged for each evening and the lay days. There is a wide range of things for family members to enjoy during the day - including watching the racing from a private garden, as the races will be close to the shore.

We're aiming for 15 East African entries at the Event and we look forward to welcoming all comers to our spectacular sailing venue on 30th January 2028. Karibu Kilifi!

Please see www.fireballkenya.com for more information. We hope to be in a position to provide financial support for boat logistics at the Kenyan end.

Slovenia

Author Miha Kavcic and extracts from Slovenian Fireball website

Active local competition

The Slovenian Cup Regatta schedule has 7 events scheduled across the season. In addition Slovenia holds a training camp and publicises the major events from nearby European nations which some Slovenians take advantage of.

Our Fleet

Fireball sailing in Slovenia is still going strong. Following the European Championship in Portorož in 2024, we have managed to keep our fleet active and continue with our regular racing programme.

We currently have around 15 Fireballs in Slovenia. Twelve boats are recorded in our 2026 racing results, with another three being used occasionally. Not all boats compete at every event, but we have a good group of regular sailors who keep the class going.

Compared with some other traditional dinghy classes, Fireball has held up well in Slovenia. Even with modern youth classes such as the 420 and skiffs becoming more popular, Fireball remains one of the most active double-handed racing classes in the country.

Racing and Results

We have a mix of inland and coastal sailing, which makes our racing calendar quite varied. Our regular venues include Velenje, Maribor and Murska Sobota, as well as Izola and Portorož on the coast.

In 2024, Marko Volk and Lara Bastar won both the Slovenian Cup and the National Championship.

The 2025 season included six regattas in the Slovenian Cup. Barbara Kraigher and Rok Volk won the overall title, followed by Anže Flis and Matjaž Rojc in second place, and Miha Kavčič and Tomo Pečaver in third. Marko and Matic Kocjančič won the National Championship.

For 2026, we originally planned seven regattas, although one event had to be cancelled. Participation at individual events has ranged from four to nine boats. In the Slovenian Cup standings provided before the National Championship results, Mitja Nemec and Jurij Nemec were leading, followed by Miha Kavčič and Tomo Pečaver, and Tomaž Bastar and Katja Mohar Bastar.

One encouraging point is that Fireball still compares well with other double-handed classes in Slovenia. At the 2026 Portorož Cup, there were seven Slovenian Fireballs, the same number of Slovenian boats as in the 420 class and more than the three Slovenian boats in the 470 class. Of course, this is just one event, but it gives a good indication that our class is still very much alive.

Training and International Sailing

We traditionally start our season with a spring training camp in Šimuni on the Croatian island of Pag. It is a good opportunity to get back on the water, work on boat handling and tuning, exchange a few ideas and, of course, enjoy some time together before the racing season starts.

Some of our sailors also travel to international regattas. For 2026, our calendar included events in Switzerland, Italy, Belgium and the Czech Republic.

More Than Just Racing

What makes our Fireball community special is not only the racing but also the people.

We have family crews, mixed crews, experienced sailors and younger sailors sharing the same starting line.

Our youngest sailor is just 14 years old, while our oldest active sailor, Alenka, was born in 1951 and turns 75 in

2026. That is quite an age difference, and it says a lot about the class. You can enjoy sailing a Fireball at almost any stage of life.

There is always a good atmosphere at our events. We help each other with boats, share knowledge and spend plenty of time together after racing. For many of us, that social side is just as important as the results.

Looking Ahead

Our main goal is quite simple: keep the boats sailing and the fleet together.

We would like to see more of our occasionally active boats back on the water, encourage new crews to join us and continue organising regattas and training events.

We have also been working on updating the Fireball Slovenia website to make information about our activities, regattas and results easier to find.

We know we are not a large fleet, but we have managed to maintain an active and friendly sailing community over the years.

And at the end of the day, that is what Fireball is about for us: good racing, good friends and enjoying time on the water.

These photos show the action across Slovenian Fireball sailing at the European Championship held at Portoroz 2024. And a photo of a local Slovenian Fireball competition that shows how the fleet has continued following the Portoroz event..



Portoroz European Championship 2024



National flags flying for the Europeans at Portoroz





Crowded starts at Portoroz European Championship 2024



Slovenian Cup event 2025

United Kingdom

Author: Adam Whitehouse

Fireball UK Fleet Review of 2025

A Season of Big Fleets, Big Venues and Bigger Momentum

If 2024 reminded the sailing world of the enduring brilliance of the Fireball, then 2025 showed that the UK fleet has no intention of slowing down. Across the season, the class delivered exactly what Fireball sailors have come to expect: tight tactical racing, big breeze boat handling, relaxed boat park camaraderie, family teams, world-class champions, enthusiastic newcomers and the unmistakable feeling that this remains one of the most competitive and enjoyable double-handed dinghy classes around.

The year was framed by two big themes. First, the domestic fleet remained strong, with major championships attracting healthy entries and serious depth through the results sheet. Secondly, the international focus shifted towards Lake Garda for the 2025 World Championship, while thoughts also began to turn increasingly towards Torquay and the UK-hosted Worlds in 2026.

By any measure, 2025 was a year of momentum.

Nationals at Looe: A Classic Fireball Championship

The centrepiece of the UK season was the **P&B and Zhik Fireball National Championship at Looe Sailing Club**, held from **24 to 27 May 2025**. Looe has long been a favourite Fireball venue, combining a spectacular sailing area, a friendly club, a compact and sociable dinghy park, and just enough Cornish character to make every launch, landing and evening ashore memorable.

The championship attracted **36 entries**, with **eight races sailed** and two discards applied. The quality of the fleet was clear from the opening day, with proven championship performers, family teams, mixed crews and newer combinations all racing hard throughout the fleet.

From the very beginning, it was clear that the battle for the title would be led by two heavyweight teams: **Tom Gillard and Andy "Shandy" Thompson**, and **DJ Edwards and Vyv Townend**. DJ and Vyv opened their account with a win in race one, but Tom and Shandy quickly responded with the sort of consistency that has defined so many of their championship performances.

Gillard and Thompson's scoreline of **2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1,** discarding later retirements/DNS scores, gave them a net total of **8 points** and secured the championship in emphatic style. DJ Edwards and Vyv Townend finished second on **13 points**, while **David Hall and Paul Constable** completed the podium on **15 points**, helped by a strong finish to the series including race wins in races seven and eight.

2025 UK National Championship Podium

1. **Tom Gillard & Andy Thompson**
2. **DJ Edwards & Vyv Townend**
3. **David Hall & Paul Constable**

Behind the top three, the results showed real depth. **Peter Gray and Rich Pepperdine** took fourth, **Georgia Booth and Oliver Davenport** finished an excellent fifth, and **Graham and William Cook** rounded out the top six. The fleet also featured notable family, mixed and classic boat entries, showing again that the Fireball remains a class where elite performance and accessible participation can sit comfortably side by side.

The final day brought a suitably lively end to the championship. With the top two positions already settled, only a smaller group of hardy crews launched for the final race. By the start the breeze was already building towards 20 knots, and the final blast became a short, fast and memorable conclusion to the week. Dave Hall and Paul Constable took the final race win, with Peter Gray and Rich Pepperdine second and Paul Cullen and Simon Forbes third.



The 2025 Nationals at Looe delivered everything expected of a classic Fireball championship: close racing, strong breeze, tactical battles and a packed boat park.

Inlands at Chew: Shifts, Weed and Championship Nerve

Just a few weeks after Looe, the fleet moved inland for the **Fireball Inland National Championship at Chew Valley Lake Sailing Club**, held on **14 June 2025**. With **17 entries**, the event offered a very different test from the Cornish sea venue. Instead of waves and coastal strategy, Chew served up rain showers, changing breeze, sharp shifts, flatter water and the added complication of large weed patches created by the warm spring.

Saturday proved particularly tricky, with the race team working hard around rain showers and storms over the hills that altered both wind strength and direction. Three races were completed from the planned four, with the fleet having to manage not only the shifts but the challenge of keeping clear of weed areas across the lake.

Paul Cullen and Simon Forbes made the early statement by winning race one, showing that this was not going to be a straightforward procession for the usual front-runners. However, as the event developed, **Tom Gillard and Andy Thompson** once again found a way to turn difficult conditions into winning results. They won races two and three on Saturday, then added further wins on Sunday to secure the championship with a race to spare.

The final results placed Gillard and Thompson first on **9 points**, with **DJ Edwards and Vyv Townend** second on **16 points**, and **Paul Cullen and Simon Forbes** third on **18 points.** David Hall and Paul Constable finished fourth, while Kevin Hope and Richard Bailey completed the top five.

2025 Inland Championship Podium

1. **Tom Gillard & Andy Thompson**
2. **DJ Edwards & Vyv Townend**
3. **Paul Cullen & Simon Forbes**

The Inlands underlined one of the great strengths of the Fireball: it rewards all-round sailors. The same boat that powers downwind in open water also demands touch, feel and tactical patience on inland venues. Chew provided all of that, plus a few involuntary tacks, windward dumps and moments of weed-related drama for good measure.



Fireball Inland Championship at Chew © Chris Meredith

Tom Gillard and Andy Thompson continued their dominant domestic season with victory at the 2025 Fireball Inland Championship at Chew Valley Lake.

Lake Garda Worlds: A Huge International Stage

The international highlight of the year was the **2025 Fireball World Championship at Circolo Vela Arco on Lake Garda**, held from **22 to 30 August 2025**. The event attracted a remarkable 136 boats, described by Fireball International as the largest Fireball fleet outside the UK, and brought together crews from across the world for one of the most spectacular championships in recent class history.

Lake Garda delivered the full championship experience. The early part of the week brought classic Ora conditions, with strong southerly breezes reportedly reaching up to 25 knots, while the later stages became more moderate and occasionally lighter as unsettled weather affected the usual afternoon pattern.

The title went to the Swiss mixed team of **Yves Mermod and Maja Siegenthaler,** who won by three points after a nine-race series. Their victory was historically significant: Fireball International noted that it was only the fourth time in three decades that a non-British pairing had won the Fireball Worlds.

For the UK fleet, there was still plenty to celebrate. **DJ Edwards and Vyv Townend** finished second overall after a superb series that included three race wins, while double defending world champions **Tom Gillard and Andy Thompson** finished third.

2025 Fireball World Championship Podium

1. **Yves Mermod & Maja Siegenthaler, Switzerland**
2. **DJ Edwards & Vyv Townend, Great Britain**
3. **Tom Gillard & Andy Thompson, Great Britain**

Further down the fleet, there were more strong British performances. **David Wade and Iain Blake** finished fifth overall and took a race win, while **Peter Gray and Richard Pepperdine** finished sixth and also recorded a race win. **Georgia Booth and Oliver Davenport** finished eighth overall, with Georgia recognised as the first

female helm, while **Dave Hall and Paul Constable** finished twelfth overall and won the combined over-125 category.

The event also highlighted the future of the class, with **Daniel and Henry Thompson** finishing nineteenth overall and winning the Under-25 World Championship. Their performance was another encouraging sign that young sailors continue to see the Fireball as a serious, exciting and rewarding racing boat.



The 2025 Worlds on Lake Garda brought together 136 boats for one of the largest and most spectacular Fireball championships ever held outside the UK.

The Depth of the UK Fleet

One of the defining features of 2025 was the sheer quality running through the UK fleet. At the front, the same names continued to perform at the highest level internationally. Gillard and Thompson, Edwards and Townend, Hall and Constable, Gray and Pepperdine, Wade and Blake, Booth and Davenport, and Cook and Cook all featured strongly across the season.

But the health of the class is not measured only by the podium. The Nationals at Looe had quality throughout the top twenty, including family teams such as **Graham and William Cook, Martyn and Daniel Lewis, Steve and Tom Goacher, Oliver and Ben Rayner, Anthony and James Willcocks, Daniel and Henry Thompson,** and **Imogen and Dave Wade**.

The class also continues to show its strength as a mixed, family and multi-generational fleet. At the Nationals, **Georgia Booth and Oliver Davenport** finished fifth overall, while the Worlds saw Georgia and Oliver eighth overall and Georgia recognised as first female helm. The Fireball remains one of the few high-performance dinghy classes where world-class sailors, family teams, new partnerships, mixed crews and older boats can all share the same start line and find meaningful battles.

A Class That Still Rewards Skill

The results from 2025 tell an important story about the boat itself. The Fireball continues to reward preparation, tuning, boat handling and tactical awareness. At Looe, coastal knowledge, speed through waves and confidence in breeze all played a role. At Chew, shifts, gusts and weed made decision-making crucial. At Garda, the world's best had to master big fleets, long start lines, the Ora, cliff effects and changing weather patterns.

That variety is part of the Fireball's enduring appeal. It is not a boat that rewards only one style of sailing. It asks for physical commitment, but not brute force alone. It demands technical accuracy, but still leaves room for flair. It rewards the sailors who can read a racecourse, communicate clearly, change gears and keep the boat moving in everything from flat-water shifts to full-send reaches. In 2025, that challenge once again proved irresistible.

Volunteers, Clubs and the People Behind the Racing

No annual review would be complete without recognising the clubs, race teams, volunteers, class committee, photographers, report writers, measurers, sponsors and shore teams who made the season possible.

Looe Sailing Club delivered a memorable Nationals, with reports praising the welcoming shore team, the efficient race committee and the atmosphere around the boat park and bar. Chew Valley Lake Sailing Club also hosted a successful Inland Championship in difficult and changeable conditions, with the race team working hard to manage shifting breeze, storms and weed-affected areas.

The Fireball fleet has always relied on volunteers who give their time because they care about the class. 2025 was another reminder that great racing does not just happen. It is organised, promoted, photographed, scored, reported, measured, launched, recovered and celebrated by people who often do far more than most competitors ever see.

Building Towards Torquay 2026

As the 2025 season progressed, attention naturally began to turn towards the **2026 Fireball World Championship at Royal Torbay Yacht Club**. Fireball International lists the 2026 Worlds as being hosted in the UK at Royal Torbay Yacht Club, with the event scheduled for July 2026.

For the UK fleet, the prospect of hosting a Worlds is more than just another championship. It is a chance to showcase the class, the country, the sailing waters of Tor Bay and the strength of the UK Fireball community. Much of the enthusiasm seen through 2025 was undoubtedly helped by the knowledge that a home Worlds was just over the horizon.

Torquay gives the UK fleet a focal point: for training, boat preparation, promotion, sponsorship, social planning and recruitment. It also gives overseas sailors a reason to look towards the UK and see a class that remains active, competitive and welcoming.

If 2025 was the year of building momentum, 2026 is the year that momentum gets its showcase.



Fireballs racing at Royal Torbay YC © Tania Hutchings / www.50northphotography.co.uk

All eyes now turn to Torquay, where the UK fleet will welcome the world in 2026.

Final Reflections: Why 2025 Mattered

The 2025 season mattered because it showed the Fireball doing what the Fireball does best.

It delivered close domestic championships. It produced strong international performances. It showcased mixed teams, family teams, youth sailors, veteran champions and newer combinations. It proved that the class remains capable of attracting big fleets, including a 36-boat UK Nationals and a 136-boat World Championship fleet on Lake Garda.

It also reinforced something less measurable but just as important: the Fireball still has a distinctive spirit. It is competitive without being closed. Serious without being sterile. Technical without losing its sense of humour. Demanding without being inaccessible.

The names at the top of the results sheets deserve huge credit. Tom Gillard and Andy Thompson dominated the UK championship season. DJ Edwards and Vyv Townend pushed them hard domestically and came within touching distance of a world title. David Hall and Paul Constable, Peter Gray and Rich Pepperdine, Georgia Booth and Oliver Davenport, David Wade and Iain Blake, and many others gave the season its depth and colour.

But the wider fleet deserves credit too. The sailors who travelled, launched in breeze, dried sails in car parks, fixed boats between races, wrote reports, took photos, lent spares, welcomed newcomers and kept the socials going are every bit as central to the story.

The new design which was showcased back at the February dinghy show had the desired effect and started the orders rolling in for the team at Windermark and 15 new boats into the class in one year is huge.

2025 was not just a good year for the UK Fireball fleet.

It was a reminder of why the class continues to endure.

Fast boats. Close racing. Good people.

And with Torquay waiting in 2026, the best may still be to come.

United States

Author: Peter Wirth

Fireball activity in the US is very light with our membership around 9 members. In 2025 we had scheduled a US Nationals as we had commitments from 5 boats. Then two of the boats pulled out and we made the decision to cancel the Regatta. We have a new member who purchased one of the new modified Fireballs and we were looking forward to seeing it at the Nationals, but he had other commitments.

Tim and Russel will be sailing at the Worlds and hopefully they will generate some interest in the class with their local sailing club in California. I believe they are trying to bring back another boat from the Worlds. Clay is trying to get a container full of boats brought into the US from the Worlds. We'll see how successful he is at achieving that.

I send out multiple invitations each spring from our membership list to join the class. Even with a few new boat owners these boats sail locally and don't feel they get any value from joining FI.

Dave White has been working with Dave Hall on updating Dave White's manual for building wooden Fireballs using the new design. Dave White has been active for the past 30 years in helping new boat builders with their projects. It is great that the 2 Daves are working together. There are a few new wooden boats that have been completed, but the owners appear to be more interested in the build than sailing their finished boats.

Our annual Canadian/USA get together at the Columbia River has been put on hold due to White House border policies. It may take a few years before we sail there again. The Portland Oregon fleet is completely inactive.

The 2026 North American Championships were held last month in Western Canada with 17 boats in attendance. The high cost of fuel at the time prevented Pat Crump from attending as the long drive, hotels, etc. was too costly. The good news is 17 Canadian boats were on the water.

Re-building the USA fleet is a challenge as the boat needs to be on the water sailing where potential boat owners see the boat on the water. That just isn't happening. Owners of the old boats that Clay was trying to promote appear not interested in upgrading to the modern design or putting in the effort to maintain them.

We welcome any input on how to grow the Fireball fleet in the USA.

South West United States Region: A resurrection story.

We are having fun.

Author: Clay Poulson

The re-start

Not so long ago, for some odd reason, a modern Winder Fireball landed in Phoenix, Arizona in the western USA. This boat owner was unfortunately met with few other Fireballs in the area. There were a few odd older boats scattered around the US but no Fireball fleet had raced these waters for over 20 years. Luckily, for the sake of the size of their garage, a French/Bolivian couple living in Los Angeles picked up an old 6000 series Sailnetics Fireball.

The two Fireballs sailed occasionally in either Arizona or California just to stay in touch. Then a guy in Colorado picked up an old Rondar and hauled it down to Arizona for some sailing... and he was hooked.

Keep things going

The next year the small group of Fireballs decided to try and hold one event in each of our three states; Arizona, California, and Colorado. We advertised the three regatta series a bit ...and the turnout was far greater than anticipated!!! We had unexpected old boats and lots of sailors showed up at every event. Everyone who wanted to try out got a chance to sail a Fireball on those three weekends .. and the boat sells itself.

Next growth steps

So for 2026 we again planned to have a three regatta series ....and the enthusiasm took off. Two new boat owners volunteered to hold events at their respective clubs in Los Angeles, CA and Lake Havasu, AZ to give us a solid five Fireball events in the southwest US in 2026.

Moreover, this group is trying to seriously grow more by importing a container of new, at least to us, Fireballs from England early next year. We just need good boats, we are going to get them, and we are going to sail them.

Amazingly, a new Fireball fleet has resurrected in the Southwest USA!! Incredible as we went from zero to three to five events in three years.

Here are some shots of the group enjoying competition at the events and proudly wearing their fireball shirts

:


USA
14031
15120


fireball


International Fireball
United States