

2022 Gul Fireball Worlds – Lough Derg- Drominieer IRL

21 to 26 August

Report by Cormac Bradley @ sail world.com

Day 1

There was no racing today at the Gul Fireball Worlds. The Race Officer held the fleet ashore as there was no wind in the proposed race area. He went afloat in a rib to assess the wind and recorded speeds of less than 2 knots.

When the Race Committee went afloat the wind strength did not reach the minimum requirement set by the RO. It flickered above the 5knot minimum briefly but never developed across the course.

N over A was signalled at 16:15.

Day 2

After the loss of two races on Sunday due to insufficient wind, IRO Con Murphy advised the fleet at the GUL Fireball Worlds that three races would be on the agenda for Monday with an earlier start time of 11:00. He was true to his word as he departed the shore shortly after 10:00 and got the fleet away to a punctual start for Race 1, a two-lap triangle and sausage course. Wind at this stage was of the order of 8 knots with occasional fluctuations above and below this number.

The procession of red spinnakers on Thursday and Friday's racing last week was broken when a white spinnaker was seen to take the lead at the weather mark, just less than a mile away from this correspondent on the committee boat. It turned out to be the spinnaker of Claude Mermod & Ruedi Moser (SUI 14799) and they held the lead throughout the race. Behind them we found another white spinnaker but with a mainsail that had a distinctive sailmaker's label - that of Tom Gillard & Shandy (GBR 15122) and North Sails. However, the hosts of this regatta, were also well to the fore with the green spinnaker of Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella (IRL 15093) in third. Hayling Island's David Sayce and Gareth Edwards (GBR 15112) would be next in line with Derian and Andy Scott (GBR 14941). The top reach of the triangle looked exciting from our perspective and the second reach was also of a high standard. These ended up being the final positions.

Race 2 was also a two-lap course but with more wind - the knots creeping up to 10 - 12. We also found ourselves with a new running order with Steve & Tom Goacher (GBR 15145) leading the fleet around the course - again quite comfortably. The Czech Republic pairing of Jiri Paruzek & Jakub Kosvica (CZE 15141) made their way to second place with Mike Deane & Paul Disney (GBR 14778) getting into third. McCartin & Kinsella sailed into fourth with David Hall & Paul Constable (GBR 15155) getting into fifth. The religious conviction that left was the way to go started getting diluted in this race as more boats set off for the second weather mark by taking a hitch to the right. Also, on the downwind leg of the sausage, the fleet was more inclined to split left and right.

Having completed the two races slightly ahead of schedule, the Race Officer decided to give the fleet a three-lap third race - triangle-sausage-triangle. After another clean start in winds that were consistently above ten knots, the North jockeys, Gillard & Shandy had a very substantial lead. Indeed, the first three or four boats had pulled away from the body of the fleet and all looked comfortable. The balance of the podium places on the water were filled by Hall & Constable and Isaac Marsh & Oliver Davenport (GBR 15162), the P&B jockeys, but McCartin & Kinsella were in the chase as well as

Mermod & Moser and Heather McFarlane & Chris Payne (AUS 15152). During the latter stages of the race the wind started to fade but never got below the 5knot threshold.

Hall & Constable chased down the leaders and by the last leeward mark there were only boat-lengths between them. Marsh & Davenport took third, followed by Mermod & Moser. McCartin & Kinsella were the best of the Irish again in 5th, with Noel Butler & Stephen Oram (IRL 15061) coming home in 17th.

Results after Day 2: (top ten)

Pos	Sail No	Crew	R1	R2	R3	Pts
1	GBR 15122	Tom Gillard & Shandy	2	8	1	11
2	IRL 15093	Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella	3	4	5	12
3	GBR 15155	David Hall & Paul Constable	8	5	2	15
4	CZE 15141	Jiri Paruzek & Jakub Kosvica	7	2	8	17
5	GBR 15145	Steve & Tom Goacher	6	1	11	18
6	SUI 14799	Claude Mermod & Ruedi Moser	1	18	4	23
7	GBR 14941	Derian & Andy Scott	5	11	7	23
8	AUS 15152	Heather McFarlane & Chris Payne	13	6	6	25
9	GBR 15151	Martyn & Daniel Lewis	10	13	9	32
10	GBR 15162	Isaac Marsh & Oliver Davenport	11	20	3	34

Another three races are scheduled for Tuesday with an 11am start.

Day 3:

The dinghy park at Lough Derg Yacht Club, hosts to the GUL Fireball World Championship, is quiet this morning! Is that down to Irish hospitality on Crews' Night? Or is it rather that the sixth race of the World Championship programme was completed on Tuesday afternoon. For those seasoned international competitors, you know it has to be the latter!

A further three races were completed yesterday, again light to slightly stronger winds that presented challenges to both the race management team and, of course, the competitors. When the committee boat took up station in the start area, the wind strength was measured at above 6 knots, not huge numbers, but enough to justify the start of racing. During the first two races this grew and on occasion got into double figures, but more at the 10, 11, 12 range. An occasional reading of 14/15 knots was noted but these were very short sharp blasts. The other issue for IRO Con Murphy was that the breeze was flicking right and left and that made for a difficult decision as to what number to set his weather mark at. There was continuous chatter between the committee boat, the pin end boat and the weather mark to monitor wind strength and direction.

Race 4, the first of the day got away to the most perfect start under a U Flag that any race officer would wish for. A row of Fireball bows stretched the length of the line, with absolutely no sag in the middle. It is a rare sight and regrettably not one we were able to get a justified photograph of. Within a short distance off the line the fleet was spread across the width of the course from left to right, east to west. The beat was around the one-mile mark and post-race I was advised that the first boat around was Niall McGrotty & Joris Rooney (IRL 14938). This is not a combination that has featured in any of the reports from this regatta. Why? Because they are a brand-new, out of the box combination. Niall's crew was forced out of the regatta due to illness and Joris was recruited

overnight. A Mirror sailor, the first time he stepped in a Fireball was Tuesday morning. Niall advised me that they took their time getting set up for the spinnaker which is why he doesn't feature in my first leeward mark rounding report.

The lighter winds seem to have suited our antipodean visitors, Heather MacFarlane & Chris Payne (AUS 15152), because at the leeward mark they had a healthy lead. I am unable to tell you which way they went up the beat because of the length of that leg, but by the leeward mark they had a 150m lead on the fleet. Behind them the chasing pack consisted of a multi-national pack including FI Commodore Christina Haerdi & Cedric Landerer (SUI 14859), Tom Gillard and Shandy (GBR 15122), Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella (IRL 15093), Jiri Paruzek & Jakub Kosvica (CZE 15141), the Willcocks brothers Anthony & James (GBR 14928), Kevin Hope & Russell Thorne (GBR 15133) and Katie Byne & Lia Horne (GBR 14883).

Up the next beat the favoured side seemed to be the left initially but some of the boats took a hitch across before a long port tack. At the finish, the order was as follows, Gillard & Shandy, MacFarlane & Payne, Martin Kubovy & Roman Rocek (CZE 15019), Ed Butler (Jr) & Fionn Conway (IRL 14969), and Paruzek & Kosvica (CZE 15141).

Race 5 required a postponement and a General Recall before it got away. The symmetry of the first race start was absent as there was a bunching towards the pin end of the start line. The wind was getting closer to the 8/9 knots mark at this stage but was still moving around. Again, this led to a wide spread of boats across the width of the course. In the Pre-Worlds, rec spinnakers had dominated the opening stretch of the top reach. For the Worlds, some of these were sporting new downwind colours, but the dominant colour at the front was white - a la MacFarlane & Payne and Gillard & Shandy. However, in this race a silver/grey spinnaker was making a huge difference to its owners, father and son combination, Martyn & Daniel Lewis (GBR 15151) as they powered over boats in front of them en route to the gybe mark. By the leeward mark, the running order and spinnaker colour was MacFarlane & Payne, (white) Lewis & Lewis, (silver/grey) Claude Mermod & Ruedi Moser (SUI 14799), (white), McGrotty & Rooney (IRL 14938) (blue), Mianne Erne & Clay Poulson (SUI 15063) (light blue/red) and Alistair Court & Gordon Syme (IRL 15167) (blue).

The approach to the second beat saw more boats working a middle and right aspect of the course and the boat to benefit most appears to have been David Hall & Paul Constable (GBR 15155), whom I didn't pick up through binoculars at the gybe mark but on the downwind leg of the sausage their yellow and black spinnaker was rather conspicuous. Indeed, they looked to be putting in a strong challenge to Lewis & Lewis approaching the leeward mark from different directions. Race 5's finishing order saw the fleet led home by Lewis and Lewis, holding off Hall & Constable, followed by MacFarlane & Payne, Mermod & Moser and Katie Byne & Lia Horne (GBR 14883).

Race 6 was set at three laps partly due to the running time of the first two races, marginally short of target time and partly due to stronger wind. This time the log jam was at the committee boat end and one of the combinations to suffer most from that was a high-profile Irish combination. Yet again, the fleet spread very quickly across the course. At the weather mark, white, blue and green spinnakers were to the fore and the first three boats looked to have broken away from the rest of the fleet. By the leeward mark, the running order was as follows: Gillard (GBR 15122/white), Chris Bateman & Thomas Chaix (IRL 14750/blue), MacFarlane (AUS 15152/white), McCartin & Kinsella (IRL 15093/green), Mermod (SUI 14799/white), Haerdi (SUI 14859/can't remember), Lewis (GBR 15151/silver grey) and Josh Porter & Cara McDowell (IRL 14695/blue).

As the fleet approached the leeward mark for the second time, the conspicuous absence of the committee boat would have alerted them to the fact that things were not as they should be. The dropping wind strength necessitated a change of plan and the Race Officer settled on a shortened

course at the gybe mark. From that vantage point, the tactic for the last beat was to go right and then sail a long starboard tack leg to the weather mark.

The finishing order therefore was; Gillard, MacFarlane, Mermod, McCartin, Bateman.

With six races complete, we were back on programme and all those loosely made plans for lay-day could be fulfilled. Tuesday night also saw the hearing of two protests and another protest was withdrawn due to "an out of court settlement" with the knowledge of the Jury Panel.

Following racing, the SUP Games took place in the inner harbour in front of the club. Organised and refereed by Jane Butler and Barry McCartin, they featured individual races, backward racing and an international relay race. The RRS wouldn't have covered some of the on the water transgressions, but they attracted a lot of spectators with much cheering on for the competitors.

The "discretionary daily prize-giving" by the Irish hosts, supported by GUL was delayed pending the outcome of the protests, but was completed before supper - pig on a spit. That was followed by a live jazz band with a special trumpet appearance by French helm Charles La Calvez (FRA 14950).

Pos	Helm & Crew	Sail No	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Pts
1	Tom Gillard & Shandy	GBR 15122	2	8	1	1	6	1	11
2	Heather MacFarlane & Chris Payne	AUS 15152	12	6	6	2	3	2	19
3	Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella	IRL 15093	3	4	5	6	9	4	22
4	Claude Mermod & Ruedi Moser	SUI 14799	1	18	4	16	4	3	28
5	Jiri Paruzek & Jakub Kosvica	CZE 15141	7	2	8	5	24	9	31
6	David Hall & Paul Constable	GBR 15155	8	5	2	17	2	17	34
7	Martyn Lewis & Daniel Lewis	GBR 15151	9	13	9	13	1	7	39
8	Derian & Andy Scott	GBR 14941	5	11	7	18	15	10	48
9	Christina Haerdi & Cedric Landerer	SUI 14859	11	15	32	9	8	6	49
10	Isaac Marsh & Oliver Davenport	GBR 15162	10	20	3	7	12	24	52

Wednesday was a lay day – no racing

Day 4

Tom Gillard of Sheffield Vikings and Shandy from East Antrim Boat Club in N. Ireland dominated Thursday's racing at the GUL Fireball Worlds in Lough Derg Ireland.

Another two races were sailed today and Gillard and Shandy won both comfortably, to give themselves a 17pt cushion going into the last day. Race Officer, Con Murphy, had his hands full today with a wind that fluctuated left and right but was reasonably steady in strength. In both races he had to move the weather mark in order to keep the race a fair contest. In Race 1 he set the fleet a 1.1mile beat on a bearing of 230 degrees but was being constantly fed information on wind strength and direction from his weather mark layer and the pin end boat some 450m away. In Race 2 he stretched the beat by another 0.1 of a mile and with a weather mark that was slightly left of the mark used for the first race.

Even from a distance, we could see that a Dacron-sail Fireball was first around the mark in Race 1 This was IRL 14378. The significance of this achievement is that the boat in question is a wooden boat and in 1995 this won the Fireball Worlds in the hands of John Lavery & David O'Brien, sailed out of the National Yacht Club. For this regatta it is being sailed by Ben Graf and Alexander Farrell out of Lough Ree Sailing Club.

As for the business end of the race, Gillard and Shandy took the lead on the first reach and never really looked back. In this race they were chased by the Aussies, Heather & Chris and by the Swiss, Claude and Ruedi.

At the leeward mark of the triangle, the chasing group, behind Gillard & Shandy was Claude & Ruedi, Ben & Alexander, Xavier Broise & Trystan Robin (FRA 14779), Jiri Paruzek & Jakub Kosvica (CZE 15141) Brenda & Oscar Houtt (GBR 14977), David Hall & Paul Constable (GBR 15155), Heather & Chris (AUS 15152), the Italians, Fabio & Adriana (ITA 15054) and Chris Bateman & Thomas Chaix (IRL 14750) The fleet adjusted to the changing wind but the winners led the fleet home for their fourth win of the series. Behind them, the finishing order was Heather & Chris, Mermod & Moser, Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella (IRL 15093), who staged a magnificent recovery because they were well back at the leeward mark, Bateman & Chaix, Broise & Robin, Hall & Constable, Daniel & Harry Thompson (IRL 15156), Derian & Andy Scott (GBR 14941) with David Sayce & Gareth Edwards (GBR 15112) closing out the top ten.

Mermod & Moser's result is particularly commendable as they were pinged by the Jury on the approach to the first leeward mark and apparently capsized later in the race as well.

After another adjustment for the breeze, which was creeping up above the 10knot mark, the fleet got away to another clean start, although there was some bunching at the committee boat end. One or two boats pushed the envelope, one with an Irish number, but even these corrected themselves.

For Race 2 of the day, a 1.2mile beat was set on a bearing of 235 degrees and the fleet reached the weather mark in eighteen and a half minutes. Again, the white spinnaker of Gillard & Shandy was the first to show and again, they pulled away from the fleet. Sixteen and a half minutes later, they were leading the fleet around the leeward mark with the chasing pack in the following order; Mermod & Moser, Anthony & James Wilcocks (GBR 14928), McCartin & Kinsella, Martyn Lewis & Daniel Lewis (GBR 15151), Sayce & Edwards, Kevin Hope & Russell Thorne (GBR 15133), MacFarlane & Payne, Katie Byne & Lia Horne (GBR 14833), Josh Porter & Cara McDowell (IRL 14695) and Chris Owen & Andy Service (HKG 14754).

The majority of the fleet initially took a hitch to the right-hand side of the beat and then took a long starboard tack to work their way up the middle and left of the course. At 14:36 the leaders went around the weather mark for the second and last time with a lead that was insurmountable, thus recording a fifth win of the series and the third in a row.

Behind them came Mermod & Moser, Lewis & Lewis, Sayce & Edwards, McCartin & Kinsella, Hope & Thorne, Wilcocks & Wilcocks, MacFarlane & Payne, Broise & Robin and Bateman & Chaix.

Thus, the situation tonight (Thursday) is that Gillard & Shandy are sitting on 13pts with a 17pt cushion to second place which is occupied by MacFarlane & Payne (30pts), with Mermod & Moser a further 2pts astern. McCartin & Kinsella are the leading Irish in 4th place overall (36pts), with the first of the Czechs, Jiri Paruzek & Jakub Kosvica (CZE 15141) 5th with 47pts. Three points separates the Lewis father and son combination and David Hall & Paul Constable in 6th and 7th respectively, with Derian & Andy Scott (GBR 14941) in 8th, (73pts), Isaac Marsh & Oliver Davenport (GBR 15162) (82pts), 9th and Christina Haerdi & Cedric Landerer (SUI 14859) closing out the top ten on 89pts.

Friday's forecast is suggesting a new wind direction altogether, a NNW going NW. Will that trigger a change in the running order. It doesn't seem likely, but we wish fair winds to all those sailing tomorrow.

Final Day

WorldsLough Derg Yacht Club in County Tipperary, Ireland is quiet this morning! The yacht club which played host to the 2022 GUL Fireball World Championships over the past seven days is a scene of tents being dismantled and trailers being prepped for road trips. The past few days the regatta's WhatsApp site has seen multiple instances of sails and spars and even boats being offered for sale. Teams that came with two boats are going home with three.

And for the fifth time, Tom Gillard is a World Champion Fireball Helm, this time crewed by Andy Thompson. But before all that, a commentary on yesterday's proceedings.

As predicted the wind had swung to a more NNW direction and initially there was some strength to it, of the order of 8 knots and occasionally creeping up to ten knots. However, there was some movement in the wind direction and Race Officer Con Murphy took his time before getting the fleet away. An initial start under a "U flag" was canned and after an approximate fifteen-minute General Recall he got the fleet away at 11:19. The beat was shortened slightly to make sure the course was out of the wind shadow of the windward shore. Even so there were modest boat speeds up the beat.

A white spinnaker was the first to show. Who was it? Mermod & Moser, Gillard & Thompson or MacFarlane & Payne. It turned out to be Mermod & Moser, SUI 14799, with Gillard & Thompson, GBR 15122, back in fourth. According to Tom's pre-race assessment, this wasn't a crisis. The leaders gybed as per the mark location, but Gillard sailed on by quite some distance before he gybed. Others would follow suit. Asked afterwards why this was happening the answer was a) slightly more wind and b) a better reaching angle. It didn't cost them anything as they rounded the leeward mark in the same position, fourth.

Mermod & Moser led, followed by Isaac Marsh & Oliver Davenport (GBR 15162), Christina Haerdi & Cedric Landerer (SUI 14859), Gillard & Thompson (GBR 15122), Josh Porter & Cara McDowell (IRL 14695), Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella (IRL 15093), Chris Owen & Andy Service (HKG 14754), Martyn & Daniel Lewis (GBR 15151), Charles La Calvez & Eloise Maussion (FRA 14950) and Patrice Olivier & Jean Francois Nouel (FRA 14959).

Of the initial bunch, Marsh & Davenport took an initial tack to the left-hand side of the course before coming back right which is what the others had done. The wind was easing again as the race progressed, but then more breeze would fill in and the fleet would accelerate accordingly.

At the finish, Mermod & Moser took their second race win, followed by Gillard & Thompson, Haerdi & Landerer, Marsh & Davenport, Porter & McDowell, McCartin & Kinsella, Lewis & Lewis, Owen & Service, La Calvez & Maussion and Martin Kubovy & Roman Rocek (CZE 15019).

Gillard's pre-launch assessment was that even if Mermod & Moser won two races, he only needed a "better than 5th" finish in one race to secure the Worlds. On that basis, he and Thompson were World Champions. However, they showed no inclination to sail home for an early de-rig and shower.

With a fading wind that moved around continuously, Race Officer Con Murphy did his best to get the fleet away for a tenth race. When "stronger" wind came in it came from the north but as it passed through, the direction clocked westwards before flicking back again to the right-hand side. 14:00

came and went with no sign of a stable breeze. 14:30 passed with no improvement and at 14:41 "N over A" was signalled, we had new Fireball World Champions.

It was a fully warranted win, Tom and Andy won five of the nine races, counted two second places and dropped a sixth and an eighth. They won by a margin of eight points. Second placed Claude and Ruedi won two races, counted a fourth as their worst score and dropped an eighteenth and a sixteenth. Heather and Chris scored races results in the range 2nd to 8th and dropped a 12th and a 13th to finish third, thirteen points adrift of Claude & Ruedi.

Overall Results: (top ten)

Pos	Helm & Crew	Sail No	Pts
1	Tom Gillard & Andy Thompson	GBR 15122	9
2	Claude Mermod & Ruedi Moser	SUI 14799	17
3	Heather MacFarlane & Chris Payne	AUS 15152	30
4	Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella	IRL 15093	33
5	Jiri Paruzek & Jakub Kosvica	CZE 15141	47
6	Martyn & Daniel Lewis	GBR 15151	49
7	David Hall & Paul Constable	GBR 15155	56
8	Isaac Marsh & Oliver Davenport	GBR 15162	66
9	Christina Haerdi & Cedric Landerer	SUI 14859	69
10	Derian & Andy Scott	GBR 14941	73

At last night's prize-giving, other additional prizes were awarded:

- Perseverance Trophy: Barbara & Guy Newsome; GBR 14872, (77th)
- Classic Trophy: David Evans & William Draper; IRL 14213 (54th)
- Modern Classic: Tiarnan Browne & Oisin McAllister; IRL 14637 (45th)
- Youth Prize: Tiarnan Browne & Oisin McAllister; IRL 14637 (45th)
- First All-Female Prize: Katie Byne & Lia Horne; GBR 14883
- Veteran Prize: Heather MacFarlane & Chris Payne; AUS 15152

As to be expected thanks were recorded to all those who had contributed to the success of these World Championships - sponsors, LDYC and its members, Fireball International and the Irish Fireball Class Association, whose Chairman, Neil Cramer, was unable to join in "in-person" but did join us via a Zoom link.

From this correspondent, my thanks to all those who listened to me through all the "discretionary daily prize-givings" and the final prize-giving ceremony last night.



Tom an Shndy photo Con Murphy