

B14 Dogfight at Thorpe Bay

Report by Mark Barnes

Photographs courtesy Tania Samus (www.photoblink.co.uk)

The B14 flying circus descended on Southend. Thorpe Bay, light winds and strong tide, it was going to be a tactical weekend on the water. To add spice to the series, the fleet were to share the start with the 49er fleet.

After a 40 minute delay, starting in 5 knots of wind, the fleet got away first time with Seavolution (Mark Barnes/Pete Nicholson) winning the pin. During the race, Seavolution held a comfortable lead mixing it with the 49ers and taking the win from Team Gill (Nick Craig/Toby Lewis) and Acxiom (Mark Emmett/Allan Stuart).



Race 2 and a little more pressure, all were gunning for it with Acxiom leading off the pin from Quintec Raddison (Chris Bines/Dave Gibbons), Dynamic Sails (Dan Hollands/Phil Eltringham) and Seavolution. Up the first beat there was little to choose between the first 4 boats. However, with Seavolution getting the lay-line spot on, got the jump on the next 3 followed by Acxiom and Team Gill. Over the next two laps, the front 4 had little to choose between them but Seavolution held on to take the win with Team Gill getting the jump on Acxiom on the run into the finish.

Race 3, ebb tide starting and 5 – 6 knots of wind from 095°(T), the beats would be shorter and runs much longer. Quintec Raddison and Leaky Pipes (Gerry Brown/Chris Fermor) had the best starts, leading up the left hand side followed by Team Gill and the Mean Machine 00 (Barry Price/Alistair Storrar). Rounding the windward mark the fleet were closely bunched up, but with Team Gill having slipped back to join Seavolution on the back of the pack, the race was on. Down

the run the first two Quintec Raddison and Leaky Pipes went right, Team Gill and Seavolution middle and the rest left. Coming in the leeward mark Seavolution had got the jump on the fleet, but in holding tactical advantage over Team Gill, Quintec Raddison somehow managed to sail round the outside and take the lead. Up the beat there was all to lose as 3 boats swapped the lead. Coming round the top mark Quintec Raddison led from Seavolution and Acxiom. Down the run, Seavolution got the march on Quintec Raddison and led for the next round. However, many place changes and exchanges on the course was to see a tight finish with Acxiom just beating Team Gill and Quintec Raddison slipping to 4th.

With Seavolution leading from Team Gill and Acxiom, free bar and dinner kindly provided by EITS (Steve Hopper), who would survive to close out the series.



Sunday's races and more of the same with nothing to chose between the first 4 boats.

Race 4 and Quintec Raddison led the charge, only to be closed out when passing a 49er on the first reach, leaving Team Gill and Acxiom to take up the charge with little to chose between them. However, Team Gill had gear failure during a gybe, releasing Seavolution to jump Acxiom and take the lead. Over the next beat, Acxiom hounded Seavolution, passing them at the windward mark. Down the run, Seavolution closed on Acxiom. As they traded gybes the gap closed slightly to less than two boat lengths, resulting in 4 gybes approaching the finish. Acxiom held on to win by a pole length.

Race 5 and a real roller coaster. With nothing to chose between the front B14s and mid fleet 49ers, the front pack of B14s led by Seavolution, arrived at the windward mark with the 49ers. Down the run, all four fleets (B14, 49er, 29er and Musto) converged on the leeward gate. With overlaps between Quintec Raddison, Dynamic Sails and Acxiom, the ducking and diving was critical. Most went for the right buoy, but Seavolution and the leading Musto managed to squeeze through the starboard tackers to the less favoured buoy. Up the next beat, the lead changed 5 times with Acxiom hounding Seavolution all the way. Down the run, Seavolution covered Acxiom and Quintec Raddison with little to chose between the latter two at the finish but the result going in Acxiom's favour.

Race 6, Quintec Raddison clipped the pin and spun, Seavolution held the middle and Acxiom the left. A race to the left between the fleet saw Seavolution bounced by Acxiom, so slipping to fourth and Quintec Raddison getting back into the dog fight. Over the next round, Quintec Raddison got the better of Acxiom and Seavolution slipping into second on lap 3. Down the last run, a big shift and tight reach on port was to see a final twist in the tale. Going into the finish Quintec Raddison

had to drop their kite to make the finish, resulting in Seavolution managing to just roll them going into the finish with Acxiom 3rd.



A well run event both ashore and afloat with great hospitality.

So after some incredible racing, Seavolution were to take the meeting with a score that did not justify the closeness of the racing. With the next event being the Tide Ride in two weeks, it looks as if the B14s will be very close, providing some great entertainment.

Posn	Boat	Helm	Crew	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Net
1	Seavolution	Mark Barnes	Pete Nicholson	1	1	1	(2)	1	1	7	5
2	Acxiom	Mark Emmett	Allan Stuart	3	(4)	2	1	2	2	14	10
3	QIuntec Raddison	Chris Bines	Dave Gibbons	(4)	3	4	3	3	2	19	15
4	Team Gill	Nick Craig	Toby Lewis	2	2	3	(DNC)	DNC	DNC	31	23
5	Leaky Pipes	Gerry Brown	Chris Fermor	(6)	6	6	4	5	4	31	25