

Test event - Gold to Ainslie, Silver to Lobert, Bronze to Postma

Reports & Results



The medal race for the Finn class at the Weymouth and Portland International Regatta was dominated and won by the man who has dominated and led all week here in Weymouth Bay. Ben Ainslie (GBR) had won the regatta with a day to spare, but of course, with Ainslie being Ainslie, he wasn't happy with just finishing the medal race, he had to win it as well – to add to his five race victories the past week.



And he did just that. Though the medal race for him was a mere formality, having only to finish the race to be assured gold, he tackled it like any other race and ended a fantastic week with another race win. For Pieter Jan Postma (NED) and Jonathan Lobert (FRA) it was a game of chance and risk to secure the silver and bronze medals, with four sailors below them mathematically capable of snatching away the podium positions that these two had held onto for most of the week.

At the start Ainslie won the pin, pulled out from the fleet and tacked to cross to the right hand side, which had been very favoured during the Star medal race a half hour before. But the wind shifted and Ainslie ended up more to the right and eventually rounded the top mark in third.

But downwind he moved ahead and while those behind him changed places several times, he hung onto and extended to lead the fleet across the finish line. Oscar flag was raised for free pumping at the first windward mark, with Lobert making up ground on the first downwind, rounding the opposite gate mark to Ainslie at the same time.

At the finish, Dan Slater (NZL) had crept into second with Lobert in third. Postma could only manage an eighth place finish, which dropped him into the bronze medal position. Lobert took the Silver. It wasn't the most dramatic medal race ever, but the top three maintained their podium positions and with the ever changing wind direction and strength on the Nothe course, that is perhaps all they could have asked for.

Lobert said, "I am really tired now. I had to push really hard. It was a good tactical race. It was very shifty with the pressure up and down. I just followed the wind and didn't pay much attention to the other guys. The plan at the start was just to stay behind and find a good spot in the wind and I did that well, went right to begin with and then had a nice shift back across and was in contact with the leaders at the top mark. Then I had a really good first downwind and then I just played the left hand side on the next beat."

"I was not watching PJ at all. The plan was just to go as fast as possible and then see the points at the end because he had a lot of points on me so the only chance I had was if he made some mistakes, which he did. This week was good training and I learned a lot ready for next year."

Despite dropping from Silver to Bronze Postma was not disappointed, “I am still very happy. The goal was to get a medal. Finishing eighth in the race was not the plan I had, but the plan is not always what happens. I had a good first upwind but the downwind were not good for me and I had a penalty as well. So I made a few mistakes, but I am still up there, so that's good.”

“It's been a tough season. I think I need to be a bit fitter and Perth is coming so we need to be fitter for that.”

Ainslie described his race, “It was tricky because with the other fleets the right had been paying quite strongly and just before our start the breeze shifted left slightly and was a bit lighter so I think the left had more potential in it than the previous races. But the right was still strong at the top. It's a tricky race course in there but you just have to hang in there and make the most of the opportunities.”

“It was a good race in the end. I started off well and was third round the top mark, but it was a nice way to end the week.”

“I am obviously really pleased with the way this week has gone for me personally. There is certainly an element of home advantage, being able to train here a lot helps, but we have to make the most of being on home ground.”

So Ben Ainslie continues his domination of the class. Mid week it looked to be quite tight at the top, but in typical Ainslie fashion, he is never more dangerous than when he is under threat and went on to win five of the next six races. Quite what the rest of the fleet have to do to catch him is beyond most pundits and the sailors are no doubt scratching their heads too. Of course, the true test will be a year from now – assuming he is selected for the GBR team – and this week he has made a clear statement of his intent when that time comes.

The Weymouth and Portland International Regatta 2011 is the test event for the sailing events of the London 2012 Olympic Games, as part of the London Prepares series. The Finns have sailed a 10 race series from Saturday 6 August to Friday 12 August. The medal race for the top 10 was sailed on Saturday 13 August. There are five course areas (three offshore, one in Portland Harbour and one under the Nothe) and the fleet has raced on all the courses over the week. The medal race – like all medal races - was sailed on the Nothe course.

Results after medal race (medal race position in brackets)

- 1 GBR Ben Ainslie 19 (1)
- 3 FRA Jonathan Lobert 50 (3)
- 2 NED Pieter Jan Postma 52 (8)
- 4 ESP Rafa Trujillo 62 (6)
- 5 CRO Ivan Kljakovic Gaspic 65 (7)
- 7 EST Deniss Karpak 68 (4)
- 8 NZL Dan Slater 78 (2)
- 6 DEN Jonas Hoegh Christensen 78 (10)
- 9 USA Zach Railey 94 (9)
- 10 SWE Daniel Birgmark 98 (5)

Event website: <http://www.sailing.org/london2012/2011-test-event.php>

Full Results: http://www.sailing.org/uploads/WPIR2011/Finn_Results.pdf

Finn class on Facebook with photo galleries: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Finn-Class/110408332633>

Finn class on-the-water with Twitter: http://twitter.com/Finn_Class