



Close racing between Fenwick and Barker.

## Barker takes control in light conditions

### Europa Cup Regatta

It is said that once a sailor has achieved everything else possible, the only challenge remaining open is the International Canoe. Such is the case with Sam Barker, who comes with an impressive list of credentials. At the same time, the top of the fleet has been depleted by the retirements of Gareth Caldwell and world champion Robin Wood.

A score of sailors supported this year's Europa Cup, hosted by Brixham Yacht Club, including the regular German visitors with two female sailors. Racing was all in Tor Bay, open to the east, initially with westerly winds of force 3, cloudy with some rain. Courses were generally triangle/sausage/triangle with a gate.

Barker finished the first lap of Race 1 just ahead of Mike Fenwick but the latter overtook after the leeward mark. Phil Robin arrived with others some time later. Fenwick and Barker arrived at the end of the sausage together but turned opposite ways out of the gate, Barker taking a slight lead to the finish. Robin led Clive Everest and Alistair Warren with Simon Beers as the first German and Emma Grigull as the first female, in 9th place.

Fenwick led Barker, Warren and Grigull around the first triangle of Race 2. At the end of the sausage Grigull had slipped a couple of places behind Robin and Everest. Fenwick pulled ahead of Barker for the win at the finish, Warren third and Frederik Steimann pulling up a couple of places past Grigull for fourth place.

Tuesday, the second day, brought similar conditions but with occasional sun instead of the rain for Race 3. Torsten Marquardt joined the start line from the wrong side in the closing seconds but was where he should have been when the start hooter went. Barker led all the way, Dan Skinner completing the first triangle behind him but then dropping back a place behind Fenwick. A very close finish saw Barker win by a corrected time of just three seconds from Fenwick.

Peter Smith lost his main sheet and capsized repeatedly near the finish. With help from one of the rescue boats it was repaired in time for Race 4, the long distance race, that followed.

This was an anticlockwise tour of Tor Bay, spoiled only by the weed. This did not seem to deter Barker, who finished the race literally out of sight of the rest of the fleet, three and a half minutes up from Warren. Warren was followed by Skinner, Steimann and Fenwick with a corrected spread of just 28 seconds. Although it was the long distance

race, Barker's winning time was just six minutes longer than his time for Race 3.

Wednesday was sufficiently calm for the fleet to refuse to launch. Thursday was little better, initially a northerly force 3 although the sun did have the decency to shine for a while. Race 5 was shortened to finish after just the first triangle, Barker winning in a corrected time of under 40 minutes. Steimann had a corrected time 35 seconds behind him for second place, the best result by any of the Germans in the regatta.

James Hofman, the only one still using a spinnaker, failed to start in the four minute window but was able to stand the results on their heads for Race 6, another single lap race, by leading all the way and producing the fastest winning time of the regatta, corrected to three seconds under 40 minutes. This was with the wind having veered to 70°. The fleet were back on land in time for lunch.

The forecast for the final day looked uninspiring but the weather gave the best racing conditions of the week, southeasterly with cloudless sky. Race 7 enjoyed a full three lap course yet took only eight minutes longer than Race 6. Barker, Warren and Fenwick led all the way and finished in that order. Skinner, sailing Woods' *Black Betty*, provided entertainment between races by capsizing after the finish where the current attempted to push him under the committee boat.

The final race was not a good one for the Castle Cove pair. Fenwick, together with Marquardt, was over the start line, failed to respond to the recall and was disqualified, despite sailing the second fastest time, not that it affected the final regatta outcome. Barker established a healthy lead on the first lap but had technical problems on the second lap, after which he had to fight his way back to an eventual eighth place. This left room for some fresh blood at the front, Skinner, Warren and Everest taking the first three places.

With six results to count, this allowed the rare luxury of two discards. Barker, with five wins and only one result poorer than second place, showed he has taken control of the class, leaving fellow Castle Cove sailor Fenwick trailing in his wake. Steimann, in 7th place was the best of the Germans while Grigull, in 9th was the best female, including a couple of 5th places.

A full set of results in light conditions on the sea was something of a novelty, well appreciated.