

RYA HONDA YOUTH RIB CHAMPIONSHIPS

NORTHERN IRELAND FINALS

On Saturday 23rd June the Northern Ireland Finals of the RYA Honda Youth Championships were held at East Down Yacht Club on Strangford Lough.

Competition prepared RIBs were provided by the RYA who also set a difficult course in the testing conditions of rain and gale force winds.

23 children representing winners from each of the NI yacht clubs taking part, entered the competition. There were two classes, 8-12 years of age and 13-16 years. The course consisted of a slalom , a simulated man overboard recovery and reversing marks and was against the clock. For safety reasons each boat also had an experienced adult on board.

In the younger class only four seconds separated the first three places. Gary Fekkes from East Antrim Boat Club won with a best time of 1 min 28.29 seconds. Less than one second behind was Laura Crozier from Antrim sailing club with a time of 1 min 29.18 seconds with Ben Regan from East Down Yacht Club third in 1 min 31.37 seconds. Everyone in this class are congratulated on their performance in the windy wet conditions.

The older class brought together a number of potential winners including past NI and National champions. 15 year old Gordon Baker from the Quoile Yacht Club was first on the course and set up an excellent performance with a best time to beat of 1 min 10.92 seconds. This was not beaten until 15 year old Bangor Grammar School boy Paul Magowan representing Quoile Yacht Club, set a first run of 1 min 6.24 secs. His second run was blistering but an error at one of the marks cost him about 2 secs. However even with the error, he set an event winning time of 1 min 6.1 secs. The main opposition was expected to come from Frazer Wright running last of the competitors. Frazer was second at the National Championships last year but had just moved up to the older age group. His first run was very fast through the slalom but he missed the 'man overboard' and the time lost recovering meant a disappointing first run time. His second run looked very quick and well controlled and his best time of 1 min 10.54 secs moved him into second place less than half a second faster than Gordon.

Keith Ellison, RYA Event Director congratulated all the children on their skills and the high standard of driving, particularly in the testing conditions. The winners Paul Magowan and Gary Fekkes now represent Northern Ireland at the National Finals at Southampton Boat Show on 21st September this year. We wish them both the best of luck. Much of the summer will now be spent training for the finals.