

2016 / 2017 season in the 5o5

This year has been Paddy and mine first season sailing together.

Our goal, was to learn and assess in order to gain an understanding as to our position in the fleet and I think that we have achieved that.

We knew we would face certain challenges right from the start, for example Paddy hadn't crew a before let alone the 5o5 which is an incredibly physical boat particularly at the front. Fortunately Paddy has exceptionally good fitness and is able to break down and sequence manoeuvres quickly.

After the club Championship we focused on Sunday sailing as much as possible, this really helped us with boat handling and getting to know how each other worked.

The Sailjuice winter series was a great way to get out and start trying to line up against other boats putting our boat handle under pressure at times and starting to make us think, strategy.

It was also the first year the 5o5's had been invited to the Ovington inlands and had combined it with our inland championship. The Ovington inlands are a great event put on by Ovington to support the fleets they build boats in. The atmosphere is fantastic and well worth attending if you can (your boat does not need to be built by Ovington).

It was the first time we had the opportunity to line up against other 5o5's and test our speed. It was also the first time we had sail when it was properly windy, and it was.

At the first mark we were in the lead by about 50ms'. I was very pleased with this, I was less pleased with the way I gybed the boat. However it is always good to check the underside of your hull, it's just much quicker to do so on land rather than during a race.

On Sunday we changed the way we were gybing and started to stay upright which had improved outcomes (less swimming). As the day went on our results improved until in the last race we found ourselves battling for first and second in the race with the event winners Norman and Nick. They won the out in the end.

The next stand out event for us was the stevie Nic Memorial event held at Northampton Sc. We ended up 14<sup>th</sup> overall which is ok on a piece of water such as Pitsford but most importantly we beat the Norman and Nick who not long before had won the Inland championships. This showed progress and this is what we were looking for.

The last event of the Sail juice series was the Tiger Trophy held at Rutland. We were 20<sup>th</sup> overall out of 119. Ralph & Sophie Singleton were 13<sup>th</sup> in there RS800. It was great to finish of the Sail juice series and for the Club to win the prize for Top club. The club won some money which has been put to good use and is helping to develop the Youth & Junior sailing at the club. A section of the club that looks to be going great guns!!

The first 505 open of 2017 was held at Sheppey Sc. The Isle of Sheppey has its charms; the club is always welcoming and put on some lively evening activities.

The racing followed the normal east coast format. Loads of wind against tide on Saturday followed by light winds of Sunday dropping to no wind by the last race.

Saturday was great we led races and were competitive against boat in the top 20 in the world which is always nice and the sun was out. Sunday was a bit tougher but again some real positives to take from it.





We decided early on in the year that we wanted to take part in the French National Championships. The French Nationals are held every year on Bastille day (14<sup>th</sup> July) this year they were in Port La Banc in Brittany. We finished 9<sup>th</sup> out of 53. We achieved a 2<sup>nd</sup> in a race which was fantastic against top sailors from around the world. Going into the last race we knew who we needed to beat and by how much to secure 9<sup>th</sup> overall and in fact what we needed to do to progress higher up the standings.

In fact half way through the race we had done enough to move us up to 5<sup>th</sup> overall. Unfortunately the weather had other ideas and the fog rolled in leading to the race being abandoned. Both Paddy and I were really happy with our result it showed that we had made progress and had the speed to compete on a championship course with other sailors.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSccdKV61yI>

Our next and last event was the UK Nationals at Hayling Island at the end of July.

In the 12 years I've sailed 505 I am pretty sure I have not encountered tougher conditions than on the first day. We sailed out in the bay as really there isn't a lot of room for one 505 inside Chichester harbour let alone a whole fleet.

Out in the bay it was wind against tide and gusting just over 30knts.

30knts in a 5o5 is not a massive issue however when you add it chop of a couple of metres when things get a bit more tricky.

Only two boats in the fleet managed not to capsize, which when you look at the standard of the fleet says a lot about just how extreme the conditions were.

We had good speed even if our starts were dodgy to say the least. Charlie Walters and Dougal Cram in the other Datchet 5o5, were going well and just a little ahead of us around the race course.

In the final race of the day we capsized during the kite hoist, I fell over and the rudder stalled this dropped us from sixth to seventeenth in the race. It also prompted an engineering project from Paddy, swapping from me hoisting the kite downwind to crew hoisting the kite. This eliminates the need for me to stand up at the back of the boat whilst trying to hoist the kite in 30 knots and a 2m chop. This was a great move and although we are still testing the system it looks like it's going to stay.

The next was cancelled as the gusts of the last day were now the average of the day. So we went and had a quiet lunch with some friends.

The day three was a much gentler affair with 4 races. We had a bad first race but thereafter were consistently just in the top ten. This meant that we would be pathfinder for the first race the following day.

The last day of the Championship was looking a lot more like the first and this time it claimed another competitor's mast. The racing was close though out the fleet Mike Holt and Rob Woelfel from the USA secured the title from Nathan Batchelor and Sam Pascoe in 2<sup>nd</sup>. For the rest of us places were decided on the smallest of mistakes but overall the event was fantastic and I know we will be talking about it for a while to come.

Paddy and I are racing at the Club championships before starting to look towards the 2017/2018.

We might not do as many of the Sail Juice events preferring to attend the 5o5 class training as we are now looking at speed gains to help us prepare for the Worlds in 2018.

We will start working on next year and our goals very soon. We have a few areas that I think could make a big impact on our result.