

# RS800 2019 Season Recap and Rooster National Tour Results

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*McEwens return from season-threatening injury to grasp dominant National Tour victory.*

2019 was a season to remember for the RS800 fleet; a vintage year where the skiff-that-just-turned-twenty showed no signs of slowing down. Fifty-five boats took part in the Rooster National tour, with twenty-one new teams joining the circuit, helping produce bumper turnouts at the Garda Europeans, Eastbourne Nationals and Grafham Inland Championships.



In the Rooster National Tour, Luke and Emma McEwen racked up wins at Rutland, Stokes Bay, Lymington and the Rutland End of Seasons. A remarkable performance considering at one stage their season looked in ruins due to a ligament injury which Emma sustained during their home regatta, causing the formidable crew to miss the East Coast Piers Race, Lyme Regis Regatta and the Europeans. But perhaps the break was a blessing? The couple seized the second half of the season with a renewed energy, comfortably taking the National Championship title before securing the National Tour series. The only blemish to their otherwise perfect record was two second places at Hayling Island and the Inland Championships, where Tom Morris, crewed by Elliott Wells and Guy Fillmore stole a couple of events.

Luke and Emma's mid-season break did however open the door for Chris Matthews and Ali Hinds to seal a victory at the Marconi East Coast Piers Race in July (showing impressive speed in their 20-year-old boat). Then in August, Rob Gullan and Guy Fillmore teamed up and took a win at the tricky Lyme Regis Regatta; well-deserved after each returned from a frustrating Europeans plagued by gear failure.

However, the real sporting contest came in the battle for Silver in the Rooster National Tour. Here a titanic brawl was fought between the Singleton and the Moss families. Eventually Ralph and Sophie Singleton came out on top by a single point. The result was decided in most epic fashion during THE apocalyptic final race of the Inland Championships at Grafham Water. Cameron and Darrol Moss stormed to the front of the fleet as the wind nudged 25 knots. The father-son duo looked good for 2nd place before a capsize and retirement thwarted their charge. Meanwhile the unflappable Singletons nursed their skiff around the course in worsening conditions, taking 3rd in that most memorable of races, 4th at the Inlands and 2nd overall in the Rooster National Tour!

Incoming Class Chair Dan Goodman with Debbie Clark, stalwarts of the circuit and always fuelled by The Best Cakes, took 4th overall. Rob Gullan (helm of many crews) snatched 5th place; on sheet was his

eclectic mix of Calum Healy, Ben Ainsworth, Guy Fillmore and Mari Shepherd. The result was even more impressive considering his 'submarine' impression at the Hayling event which cost dear... surely a boat to watch in 2020, but hopefully you won't need sonar to spot it!

This 20th Anniversary year also saw the RS800 fleet visit their favourite playground of Garda. Hosted by Circolo Vela Torbole, the event was hotly contested; this time between two generations of husband and wife teams. Tom and Frances Partington emerged victorious - winning their first Championship in the class with their new boat, holding off a storming challenge as the week progressed from Andy and Allyson Jefferies. Stevie Wilson did travel to the Europeans with his wife but elected to sail with Rory Hunter, where no doubt the lack of marriage certificate saw them slip to third step on the podium!

The 2019 Nationals will be remembered as one of the greatest in recent years. Yet again it was an increased turnout for a trip to the most welcoming of hosts Eastbourne Sovereign Sailing Club.

Day three of the Nationals was billed as the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion Regatta; the Saturday was filled with heart-warming nostalgia as the fleet were treated to an Anniversary meal and after-dinner talk by RS800 designer Phil Morrison.

With class veterans Luke and Emma taking the Championship victory, one might be forgiven for thinking this event was all about the history of the class. But look deeper and you'll see a results sheet burgeoning with new enthusiastic teams and a top-ten packed full of first- or second-year campaigners. Rory Hunter and Steph Orton jumped up a spot from 2018 to claim Silver. Rob Gullan, buoyed by his first tour victory at Lyme and reunited with crew Calum Healy, together took a well-deserved debut Bronze. And so the event not only provided a reason to look back with pride, but forward with excitement (not least for Hugh and Hannah, who reportedly competed in the event three-up). The calibre of the fleet is constantly increasing, not only sailing skill on the water, but the social environment off it.



Looking to 2020 we're expecting another year of growth. The RS800 class provides an exciting melting pot of first-generation asymmetric sailors, many from Laser 4000, 5000, ISO and Boss and a new school of 29er and RS200 graduates keen to make an impression. But more than anything, the class welcomes those sailors who are passionate about sending it in a skiff, from whatever background. The RS800's popularity is rooted in its suitability to enable a variety of sailors with varying skills an awesome experience of faster-than-the-wind skiff sailing.

The 2020 calendar is already filling up, starting off with proven events at Rutland and Stokes Bay to open the year. For the Europeans we're leaving Garda behind for the picturesque Breton coastal town of Carnac. It might not have the heat of Italy, but Quiberon Bay is truly a racing-sailor's venue, with firm Atlantic breezes sweeping the sheltered waters of the protected bay. Off the water the region is truly breath taking

and our Breton compatriots assure us the seafood cuisine is far superior to the stodgy pizza and pasta festival-of-carbs the fleet 'endures' on the Italian lakes!

As for the UK Nationals, 2020 will see the fleet take on a classic domestic championship venue and home of class designer Phil Morrison (our PRO for the Championship), at Exe Sailing Club. The picturesque Devon town is located at the Western end of the Jurassic Coast where golden beaches meet Exmouth Bay.

Congratulations to all our sailors for their efforts in 2019, you've all contributed so much to the success of the fleet. We'll see you all back in 2020 to welcome new faces!

Dates for your diary!

29 February - 1 March: Visit us at the Dinghy Show on the RS stand

21-22 March: Spring Open, Rutland SC

10-13 April: French Open Skiff, Lac du Der

18-19 April: Totally Stoked, Stokes Bay SC

23-26 May: RS800 Europeans, YC Carnac, France

20-21 June: RS Summer Regatta, Royal Torbay YC

11-12 July: Weymouth Dinghy Regatta, Castle Cove SC

1-2 August: Lyme Regatta, Lyme Regis SC

10-13 September: RS800 Volvo Noble Marine National Championships, Exe SC

3-4 October: RS800 Inland Championships, Grafham Water SC

7-8 November: RS End of Seasons Regatta, Rutland SC

By Tom Morris

Photographs: Rooster National Tour prize winners by Peter Fothergill, Eastbourne Nationals thanks to RS Sailing, Garda by Emma Grayson, HISC by Peter Dickson.