

Endurance test worth every minute – for sailors and volunteers!

Pilkington Sailing Club (PSC) based at Eccleston Mere in St Helens has a long affinity with endurance races on the Marine Lake at Southport, but this year's Junior 12 Hour Race run by Southport Sailing Club was very special for 11 sailors in the PSC 'B' team.

In perfect summer weather - a steady south westerly wind and temperatures around 25 degrees – these 11 sailors took part in this popular event for the first time. Sailing an Enterprise, although they finished 31st in the 31 boat fleet (someone has to), this was a great achievement as almost all of the 13 members of the B team only started sailing this year or last as part of the PSC OnBoard Club. They are clearly intent on quickly narrowing the gap to the five member 'A' team who finished 5th overall, also a fantastic achievement for a small team.

Part of the success of the PSC OnBoard Club has been the association with Rainhill High School in St Helens, for whom the club runs an intensive two weekend course following the RYA Youth Sailing Scheme. This year the club received support for this programme from St Helens Sports Unlimited which contributed not only to the cost of the course, but also towards new equipment that will be used by all Onboard members. Those taking part in the course also automatically get junior membership of PSC for 12 months and can access regular sailing at least once a week on Tuesday evenings.

But OnBoard is not just about the young sailors. The Onboard members are well supported by mums and dads alike, who get involved in rigging and launching of boats before relaxing and watching their children sail (parents automatically get one social membership when their child joins). This is a great benefit to the club which now has more volunteers to help out on sailing evenings and some of the parents have also joined the main beginners course. The positive vibe is even stopping local dog walkers in their tracks. Caroline O'Brien, Chief Instructor and OnBoard Co-ordinator says, "they often stop to ask what is going on and can they or their children take part, so OnBoard is working as a good way of getting the local community involved as well as introducing new members".

Caroline added, "our Onboard members are the foundation of not only our 12 Hour race team in the coming years, but are also the future of the club. Although the road to getting where we are now has taken time and considerable effort, it has been well worthwhile – to see the sheer enjoyment and pride on our young sailors faces when they were taking part in the 12 Hour race cannot be put into words, roll on 2011!"

For more information on Pilkington SC, visit <http://www.pilkingtonsailingclub.co.uk/pages/main>.

For more information on OnBoard, visit <http://www.ruob.co.uk/>.

Pilkington SC enters two teams in the 2010 Southport Junior 12 Hour Race – including those getting OnBoard for the first time!