

Dutch Dart 18 Nationals

Dutch Nationals
18-20 September 2009

This was our fourth Dutch Nationals in a row, and proved to be one of the most enjoyable. The Dutch have a wide range of venues, most of them relatively sheltered, and seem to have the knack of organising and running the event in a low key way but very well.

We set off from home and caught the overnight ferry from Hull to Rotterdam, arriving in Rotterdam at breakfast time - for anyone in the northern half of the UK this much the best way to get to Holland. From Rotterdam was only a twenty minute drive to Hellevoetsluis, the venue for the event. Hellevoetsluis is a small picturesque harbour town on a huge river estuary, just inside the dam separating the estuary from the North Sea. We drove down to the Hellecat Club, which is based on a wide sandy beach a couple of miles out of town. We were a day early for the event so we put our boat together in peace and then went for a sail in a warm 15 knot breeze on flat water - what more can you ask? We then went and checked into our accommodation which was a thatched, lake side, three bedroomed house on a development less than a mile from the club complete with every mod-con and very cheap! We had time to cycle into town and find a great meal in a converted Victorian Pump-house before our house-mates for the weekend David Lloyd and JoJo Pierce arrived at eleven o'clock laden down with food a drink - a cue for a late night!

Friday was the first day of the event proper and the day dawned to what was to prove the weather for the weekend - 20 degrees, sunshine and light to moderate breezes! The 34 boats started to arrive and everyone put them together for the 1pm start wearing shorts and tee-shirts. The British contingent was completed by Kim McMullen from Dee SC who flew over to crew for Dutchman Robbie Vogelenzang.

Racing started on time in 8-10 knots of wind and David and JoJo started as they meant to go on by leading the first race from start to finish. We

started well (for us!) and managed fourth place, a good start in our perennial quest to finish ahead of the IDA Chairperson Nicolette van Gorp and crew Ruud. Racing proved quite tricky and with many wind shifts as another three races took place. David and JoJo managed 1 8 3 1 for the day to lead overall, whilst we managed 4 16 7 11 for seventh overall - one behind Nicolette and Ruud! Kim McMullen meanwhile was getting used to her Dutch helm and after a disappointing first race were proving very consistent.

That night we went into town again for a meal with a group of Dutch sailors, all who speak near perfect English. Another late one and a slow cycle home to our luxury accommodation where Nicolette and Ruud took up residence in the other bedroom.

Saturday came with more sunshine but less wind. We all drifted out to the start. A wind shift just before the start meant that the committee boat end starters could lay the windward mark. We were one of these so rounded in third place. The wind dropped steadily as the race progressed and as the last run started we had slipped to fourth. We took a gamble at the mark and gibed off to the left where there appeared to be more breeze. This proved to be the case and we overtook two boats to finish second (and overtake Nicolette in the overall standings). David and JoJo had been buried off the start line but sailed superbly to get back up to fifth at the finish. The wind was continuing to drop so we were all sent ashore to wait in the sunshine. No more wind came so racing was abandoned for the day leaving plenty of time for preparation for the event party night

which was held in an Irish beach bar next door to the club. Great food and great hospitality made for a great night and we were nearly the last to leave. David and JoJo were the last to leave, and the short cycle ride home proved too much for David who swerved off the road and disappeared head first into the road side ditch which was deep enough to completely submerge him and his bike. We had already arrived home and were shortly followed through the door by a dripping sea monster festooned with weed loudly blaming his bike for the mishap. Needless to say another very late night.

The final day of the event dawned again to sunshine and 10-15 knots of breeze which meant trapezing! David stunned the Dutch by still being able to walk (let alone sail) and he and JoJo clinched the event by winning three of the four races sailed. Robbie and Kim maintained their consistent series and managed third place overall, and we had a great day, winning the penultimate race after a great battle with Nuna Rocha and crew Ana who had made the long trip from Portugal for the event. We eventually finished sixth overall and comfortably beating Nicolette and Ruud, thus gaining revenge for the UK Nationals where they beat us by one point.

Prize giving took place outside the club house in the inevitable sunshine, and everybody packed up the boats for the journey home. Overall probably the best event of the season, and we would recommend the Dutch Nationals to anyone. See you next year?

Geoff Lloyd

Results

1st	David Lloyd & JoJo Pierce (SBSC)	12
2nd	Karel & Anette Boot (Netherlands)	26
3rd	Nuno Rocha & Ana Bonanca (Portugal)	26
4rd	Robbie Voelenzang (Netherlands) & Kim McMullen (Dee SC)	28
5th	Bas Leijen & Diane Rokx (Netherlands)	32
6th	Geoff & Jenny Lloyd (Dee SC)	32