

# Sailing and self esteem



**Geoff Holt**

The former professional yachtsman who was paralysed in a swimming accident and inspired sailors when he became the first quadriplegic to sail the Atlantic.

THE Sailability Multiclass Regatta claims to be the biggest event of its kind in the world.

First run in 2007, this year's regatta was bigger than ever with 60 boats and more than 80 disabled sailors converging on Rutland Sailing Club.

Racing took place in a selection of disabled-friendly classes which included the Challenger trimaran, the Artemis, the Access 303 (single-person and two-person), the Laser Stratos and the Access Liberty.

The only Paralympic class on show was the 2.4 metre keelboat with the SKUD 18 and the Sonar boats otherwise committed at the Sail for Gold Regatta in Weymouth meaning there were no Team GBR Paralympic squad members present to offer that extra inspiration.

Apart from snow, competitors were treated to just about every other meteorological event during the three-day event.

Gusts in excess of 30 knots, hail

and thunder greeted competitors one day with cold light airs and clear skies the rest; certainly conditions to test every aspect of a sailor's repertoire.

And none more so than Glen Gordon and Len Pope, two sailors with an intellectual disability who had flown in especially from Tortola in the British Virgin Islands to compete. More accustomed to sailing in tropical waters, they managed to win their class in the Laser Stratos despite being wrapped from head to foot in gloves, scarves and thermal clothing.

In addition to the sailors, 85 volunteers ensured the event went without a hitch. Like all regattas, there were many complex logistics to overcome, not least shore-side accommodation and on-water race management.

In addition to those challenges, most sailors with a disability needed one-to-one help getting changed into sailing gear and they need help in launching and recovering. It's an irony which underlines the benefits of sailing that the one time disabled sailors need the least help is when they are actually sailing.

Debbie Blachford, RYA Sailability Manager, said: "It is a significant operation to get everyone on and off the water as safely and as efficiently

as possible and the fact so many people are so willing to give up their time makes it such a special event.

"Self-esteem is one of the biggest things the sailors get from events such as this and when you see the sailors come off the water really enthusiastic and chattering away all the effort that goes into making it happen is really fulfilling for the competitors and volunteers."

As you would expect, racing was highly competitive with Swindon based David Durston winning the Ken Ellis Trophy for the overall regatta Champion. In addition, he also won his class sailing the Access Liberty. "It is a real honour to have won the Ken Ellis Trophy. It will go right in the middle of the mantelpiece!"

Herself winner of the Access 2.3 class, Monique Foster from Frensham Ponds, summarised her enjoyment of simply taking part in the regatta: "You not only get to see what other boats you may like to try, but you can actually have a go as well, and if you have any doubts that you may not be able to sail a certain boat, when you see someone else sailing, it takes all that doubt away," she said.

As well as celebrating the achievements of those who take the top prizes the regatta is also



Glen Gordon and Len Pope practising in Tortola

Photo: BVI Watersports

## Peace on water

THANKS to the hundred or so members of the marine community who turned up at the Harbour Lights cinema in Southampton for the screening of *The Day after Peace*.

Later in the week I blagged a ticket to a concert in Paris in aid of Peace One Day hosted by Sharon Stone and Jude Law and I had a great night mixing with the celebs.

[www.peaceday.org](http://www.peaceday.org)

[geoffholt.com](http://geoffholt.com)

Performance Partners



**PRACTICAL, PROFESSIONAL or purely for pleasure...**

38 week City & Guilds Boat Building, Maintenance & Support

Short Courses from 1 to 5 days include

- Boatbuilding & Boat Restoration
- RYA - Diesel Engines, Yacht & Boat Electrics, Marine Electronics
- Sail Making
- Rigs & Rigging with Sail Design & Maintenance
- And many more...

Woodworking Courses also available

**Boat Building Academy**  
Lyme Regis

City & Guilds Approved Centre RYA Training Centre

tel: 01297 445545  
email: [office@boatbuildingacademy.com](mailto:office@boatbuildingacademy.com)  
[www.boatbuildingacademy.com](http://www.boatbuildingacademy.com)

**Motortech** MARINE ENGINEERING

Motortech Marine Engineering Volvo Penta Centre...

- Genuine Parts
- 24hr Technical Support
- NEW Engines in Stock
- Engine Service Maintenance & Repairs

Don't be caught out by the frost this year - make sure your engine is protected... book your engine's winter lay up now

Special offers on re-powering & engine overhauls  
Call now for a free, no obligation quote t: 023 92201171

**VOLVO PENTA**

RIGHT CHOICE GENUINE VOLVO PENTA PARTS FOR OLDER ENGINES

**VOLVO PENTA SHOP**

Portsmouth +44 (0)23 92201171 [portsmouth@motortechmarine.co.uk](mailto:portsmouth@motortechmarine.co.uk)  
Chichester +44 (0)1243 512313 [chichester@motortechmarine.co.uk](mailto:chichester@motortechmarine.co.uk)  
Gosport +44 (0)23 513200 [gosport@motortechmarine.co.uk](mailto:gosport@motortechmarine.co.uk)