

# NATIONAL SCHOOLS KAYAK CHAMPIONSHIPS 2016

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November, Reading

With Storm Angus having left its mark across much of Southern England the previous night, the 2016 Nationals Schools Kayak Championships dawned somewhat grey and damp. But with Claire Balding's good wishes to the regatta being broadcast on Radio 2, the weather soon dried out to welcome the largest entry to date, with 50 crews representing 14 schools from across the country.

First up was the morning sprint session, with warm up heats to seed the crews followed by a 500m competition. With the addition of a Novice Class this year, it was a busy start to the day. James How/Tim Dowden of Langley School showed the early form of the day, just holding off the 2016 DW winning crew of Francis Huntingford/Dougal Glaisher of Blundell's School to win the 500M.

This was followed by a 200m-knockout competition, where all crews line up on a mass start with the last 5 crews in each round being eliminated. This provides great racing over such a short course, and ensures a lot of fun for paddlers and spectators alike. The Langley pairing were again dominant, and in the final round held off Blundell's and crews from Windsor Boys School, Bryanston and Bath-based Beechen Cliff to seal victory in the sprint racing.

The afternoon session is the marathon race, run over a lapped course between Caversham and Sonning. There was a fast start from a dozen crews that split into 2 early wash groups, and some very solid racing from all crews on the water. After going the full distance head to head, How/Dowden and Huntingford/Glaisher battled it out on the line, with the Langley boat taking honours. In 9<sup>th</sup> place overall were Jodie Ball/Flossie Ball of Dauntsey's winning the Ladies Trophy, while Rebecca Stairs/Archie Brocklebank of Kimbolton won the Mixed Trophy. Bryanston won the Team Trophy for the second year.

The new Novice Class trophy was won by the Blundell's pairing of Sam Taylor/Gus Gresswell, while the Novice Ladies trophy went to Julia Huntingford/Mantha Unsworth-White, also of Blundell's

Gareth Scragg, Director & Junior Teams Liaison for the Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race, commented: "There was quality racing across the board, from the novice class to the more experienced paddlers, and some real sportsmanship evident. It was a fabulous day for school paddlesport, and clearly enjoyed by all competitors."

The National Schools Kayak Championship is jointly organised by the DW Canoe Race, Marsport and British Canoeing. The objective is to encourage grassroots paddling, and better preparation and development of school teams in paddlesport. The 2017 Championships will take place on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November, full details to be published on the website.

Photo's courtesy of Ollie Harding, Olympics: [www.olympics.co.uk/2016/National-School-Championships/](http://www.olympics.co.uk/2016/National-School-Championships/)

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