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Local Heroes

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO GRASSROOTS SPORT IN THE NORTH-EAST

Collins targeting nationals following regional triumph

By Nick Roumpis

PRECOCIOUS talent t Alex Collins has set his sights on national glory after his recent success in a regional event.

The fifteen-year-old, from South Shields Sailing Club, won the Royal Yachting Association North East Young Travellers Series for 2011.

After a close-fought battle with young sailors from Tees and Hartlepool Yacht Club breathing down his neck, the teenager won the final leg of the series and won the overall title by a margin of nine points. Laura Carveth-Marshall and Luke Troath were placed second and third.

This year's series has been one of the most keenly-fought with 70 young sailors taking part from clubs covering the region from Kielder in the north to Scaling Dam in the south.

Alex, who has been a member of South Shields SC for two years, only sailed his laser dinghy this season and after winning that title, he sets his sights on qualifying for the RYA Winter Training Squad and competing for the Youth National Championships in 2012.

He said: "I missed the Youth Nationals at Hayling Island this year because of schoolwork. I am really hoping to get there next year because most of my exams will have finished."

Mike Collins, Alex's father, was delighted after his young son's achievement.

"Alex works really hard. Winter training will be tough and he will have to make sure his schoolwork is done", he said. "He deserves to give it his best shot. Alex is really passionate about his sport, if it floats he will sail it!"

In another sailing competition last weekend, young sailors aged between nine to 16 years old rocked Sunderland Harbour with their participation to Honda RYA Youth RIB Championship North East Regional Finals.

The young sailors guided their rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) in style completing a series of slalom courses.

This year, for the first time since 2006, the regional youth crown went to a powerboater outside the City of Sunderland.

Fifteen-year-old Lewis Allick from Nunthorpe on Teesside won the youth class title achieving a time of 1min and 21.8sec.

However, Sunderland held on to the junior class, with the junior title going to 12-year-old James Moore in 1min 18sec.

James, who comes from Lobley Hill in Gateshead, has sailed at Sunderland Yacht Club in several dinghy competitions and this was his second attempt in the Honda RYA Youth RIB Championship.

After the event, he said: "It is fantastic. I am going to practice for the National Championships the next few weeks."

The standard reached by the young powerboaters is improving from year to year.

David Hodgkinson, marketing communications manager for event sponsor Honda said: "We are extremely proud that in the 10th year of the Championship, we continue to inspire and encourage more young people than even before to pursue their passion for boating and also give them the skills to do so."

He added: "It allows us to underline our commitment to safety and best practice, something that we take extremely seriously as a major manufacturer of engines and inflatables."

AIMING HIGH: Alex Collins hopes to make a big splash at the forthcoming Youth National Championships after scooping the Royal Yachting Association Travellers Series