

Catapult Northern Championship 2026

In a range of conditions Gareth Ede retained his hold on the Bill Graham Northern Trophy

The Royal Yorkshire Yacht Club welcomed back the Catapult fleet to its annual Dinghy Section Regatta, which has become a longstanding date in the Catapult calendar. Race Officer Joe Franks set a series of triangle - sausage courses coping admirably with a sometimes uncooperative breeze.

Race 1

Day One saw the fleet preparing to sail in a Force 2 breeze. John Terry led off the line and was first to round the windward mark, George Evans had worked his way into second place just ahead of Gareth Ede, but Gareth was able to tuck inside at the mark rounding. And the two of them set off after John in close quarters combat with one another. By the second beat John had a 200m lead, but a major swing in wind direction left him well down to leeward, as the rest of the fleet found they could point much closer to the windward mark. Gareth and George needed just a couple of short tacks as they neared the mark, while Stuart Ede, just 70m behind them, was able to lay the mark without tacking at all.

Gareth held off George's challenge round the third lap to finish just over half a minute ahead. Another minute back Stuart took third ahead of John.

Race 2

Stuart led off the line with Gareth immediately to leeward. John in third position tacked off early to get clear air. Then Gareth peeled away while Stuart persevered for a few more yards before tacking for the windward mark, but it turned out he had overstood the mark allowing Gareth, who had judged the layline correctly to round the mark first. John came in on starboard to pip Stuart for second position. John was hot on Gareth's heels round the next two legs with Stuart within striking distance of the pair. But the dying breeze stretched out the fleet, so by the running leg of the sausage, Gareth has eased ahead to gain a more comfortable margin of just over a minute. On the final beat for the line Stuart tried pinching in an effort to make the line without tacking, but he ended having to make a couple of short tacks near the committee boat. Meanwhile George, who had been 100m back, found he could point higher and was threatening to catch the slower moving Stuart. However, Stuart managed to complete his tacks in time to claim third place.



Gareth is presented with the Bill Graham Northern Trophy by his father, Stuart
© Margaret Evans



John came an honourable second
© Margaret Evans

Race 3

Day Two dawned with only a gentle breeze, but sufficient for racing. Gareth led from the start for what became a rather processional race. By the finish he had built a four minute lead over John, with Stuart another two minutes back, while the rest of the fleet were finished a lap early.

Race 4

By now the wind was filling in, and over the course of the race it went from Force 3 to Force 4, which kicked up some short, sharp waves.

Gareth stormed away upwind and soon had a sizeable lead, while John had a fight on his hands with George. By now the waves were making tacking difficult, which slowed the leading trio. Stuart had dropped back over the preceding laps, but on the last beat he sailed more of a close reach to gain enough speed to punch through the waves enabling him to catch up and be close on George's heels. However, he couldn't overtake, and John, George and Stuart finished in that order within a minute of one another, a full five minutes behind Gareth.

Race 5

The leading trio were in close company on starboard tack as they approached the layline for the first windward mark. George in third place was effectively in control, because he was a boat length to windward of John who in turn was a boat length to windward of Gareth at the front. George took them above the

layline, which tempted Gareth, who thought he was now far enough ahead to clear the pursuing boats, to tack onto port. However, he quickly realised he had misjudged it and immediately tacked back. He thought he had got away without infringing John, and so he didn't do a penalty turn. However, he later learned that he was guilty of infringement, so he retired.

George's tactic of holding Gareth and John above the layline paid off, because he was first to the windward mark followed by John then Gareth. Gareth overtook them both downwind and went on to lead the way for the rest of the race, but, given his later retirement, the real race was now between John and George with John finishing half a minute ahead to take first place.

Race 6

By the fourth race back-to-back the helms were tiring, especially as the wind was now blowing at the top end of Force 4, and the waves were getting higher. So the Race Officer set a shorter race. Gareth was first to the windward mark followed closely by John and George.

Stuart closed the gap on George downwind and was on his heels as they approached the last leeward mark. However, the spring tide was in full flood, and it became evident that they had misjudged the line for the mark. George managed to scrape past sailing by the lee, but Stuart just four or five boat lengths back couldn't, hitting the mark mid gybe. The subsequent penalty turn put Stuart out of contention allowing George to take third place 30 seconds behind John, while Gareth took his fifth win by a couple of minutes.



George is congratulated on coming third
© Margaret Evans

Northern Championship results

Gareth Ede reclaimed the Bill Graham Northern Trophy in emphatic style with five wins out of six. John Terry came an honourable second with George Evans taking the third podium slot.

Pos	Helm	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Pts
1	Gareth Ede	1	1	1	1	(6)	1	5
2	John Terry	(4)	2	2	2	1	2	9
3	George Evans	2	(4)	4	3	2	3	14
4	Stuart Ede	3	3	3	(4)	3	4	16
5	Damien Cooney	(6)	5	6	5	4	6	26

Alastair Forrest Personal Handicap Series

To encourage those in the middle of the fleet the Catapult Class Association runs a personal handicap series in parallel with the Travellers Trophy Series of which the Northern Championships form a part.

Gareth's father Stuart, who fairs better in lighter winds, picked up enough firsts on the first day and early part of Day Two to secure victory on personal handicap. George Evans who is vying with Stuart at the top of the series leader board came a close second with two race wins under his belt, while Damien Cooney had done well enough in Race 2 to take the remaining win. So the competition for the Alastair Forrest Trophy remains tight with just two more events to go to the end of the season.

Pos	Helm	Rating	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Pts
1	Stuart Ede	902	1	2	1	1	3	(4)	8
2	George Evans	870	2	3	(4)	3	1	1	10
3	Gareth Ede	765	4	5	2	2	(6)	2	15
4	John Terry	818	3	(4)	3	4	2	3	15
5	Damien Cooney	1110	(6)	1	6	5	4	6	22