

# 2021 Youth Sailing Worlds Champions

## 29er Females



We both began our sailing in the Optimist, racing against each other until we were 15 and had to move out! We decided we wanted to sail together into youth classes, and so tried out a few boats, landing on the 29er because of how exciting it was to sail. After a huge amount of capsizes, pitch poles, a snapped mast, and being swept out into Hayling Bay by the tide, we eventually got the hang of it and made RYA Youth Squad in our second year. This was a great opportunity to train with and learn from the best sailors in the fleet, before racing them at the 29er GP series events and other regattas.

When COVID hit, training stopped, racing was cancelled and for many months we were forced to stay on land or sail only with our siblings, a very mixed experience! But, as soon as we were allowed, we jumped back into the boat and were fortunate enough to be able to train with the RYA despite the lockdowns. The first competition back in 2021 was the Spring Racing in Weymouth which became our first event win together, followed by the 29er GP at HISC in June after our exams. This event brought a mix of conditions which saw us fall out of first place in the windier races due to us being very small and light in the boat compared to the fleet. However, we knew from previous experiences to just hold on in the breeze and try to enjoy the wind and waves until conditions favoured us again. We capitalised when it was light and ended the event in first place, our first GP win! We continued training into our summer events which started with the 29er Nationals in Largs. This was a week of racing in our favourite conditions, and we became the first girls to ever win Nationals! We then went to Plymouth for the RYA Youth Nationals, and while the event was very up and down in terms of position due to the strong competition of the other girls teams, we were able to finish the event in 1st girls, which gave us a place on the British team for Youth Worlds in Oman.

After many months of anticipation and all the uncertainty due to COVID, we were so excited when we made it onto the plane heading to Oman in December along with the 14 other sailors and 3 coaches representing British Youth Sailing. The event started with the most special opening ceremony of any sailing event we have attended, complete with a very warm welcome from the organisers and locals, camel rides, a souk, traditional music and food, and mixing of water from each country competing into a big Omani urn.

We then sailed 13 races in total over 5 days, against 17 other international female 29er teams. As is typical at Youth Worlds, we shared our boat with the British 29er boys team, Leo and Sam, so we either raced in the morning or afternoon. Whilst not sailing, we watched the boys' racing from sun loungers on the beach, which was a lovely change from sailing in Rutland the week before, where we had to shake ice off our covers and could not feel our toes! Due to the unpredictable shifts of Oman's sea breeze, we had to sail consistently well all week, relying on our strong boat speed in the light and choppy conditions, tactical decision making, and the teamwork dynamic we developed over 3 years, and finished all races within the top 6 boats in a fleet of 18. We had a very close battle with the USA girls, but by fighting for every place possible in each race, we had built up enough of a points gap that we were guaranteed to win going into the single race on the last day. This meant there was little pressure and we could just race for fun, but we still went out with every intention to prove that we deserved the overall win. We won this final race and jumped into the water as we crossed the finish line (carefully avoiding the sea snakes!) to celebrate the amazing week.



Winning the event was a huge surprise because we had not been able to race internationally over the past two years, so we were unsure of the standard of the international fleet and how we would match up to them. We also had not had much chance to train in the months before the event, because Emily goes to university in the US while Flo is at university in the UK. However, we managed to get lots of training in when Emily returned a few weeks before the event, with the Youth Squad head coach, Tom Walker. However, it was the many years of hard work beforehand and support by our coaches in both Oppies and 29ers that had put us in a strong position going into Worlds.

Standing on the top of the podium at the Youth Worlds after the most incredible 3 and a half years through 29ers was an amazing way to end our journey and we were so proud to have even got to an event we had both dreamed of when we started at 15, let alone to win it! A big thank you to everyone at HISC for all the messages of good luck and encouragement during the week. It meant so much to us to know sailors back in the UK were watching the results and cheering us on.

Emily Mueller and Flo Brellisford

