



## LASER TRAINING IN SWORDS SAILING AND BOATING CLUB

### Week 23, Year 2018: This is when it all started!

We were all keeping an eye on the weather forecast during the week, every single one of us was hoping that the Gods would give us the window we needed to make it a success!

Even right to that very Saturday morning, few messages were sent on the SSBC Mono WhatApps Group wondering if the training was going to be cancelled or not due to lack of wind!

With little hope, we all arrived at the Swords Sailing and Boating Club to find out that our prayers were heard! Wind, there was and not too much nor too little, just the perfect conditions for an outstanding and memorable Laser training week-end we were all very much looking forward to!

The Gods did not fail our faith!

And this is at that very moment that the Lord arrived. Former club member from the SSBC, well known Laser sailor, Damian Lord arrived from his exile country, Galway!

We were all there, apart from Robert whose destiny had been revealed the day before. Due to a Force Majeure out of his control, Robert, our Top Laser sailor was unfortunately not going to make it!

We all gathered to the clubhouse, and this is with a tint of Galway accent that Damian read out all the topics we had requested to get covered.

He put down on the table the 20 pages notes, looked at us in the eyes and simply said: there is no way we are going to cover all this!

He then took his 2 pages notes and read them to us to put back a smile on our faces! There, we knew we were in good hands.

The training started at 10am sharp, with a tiny course to practice Starts and one short race lap!

It felt like we could touch the windward mark with your hand while our transom had still not crossed the line! Sweat started to pour down our faces. Damian called us one by one and told us:

I want you to take a transit, then you come to the line, stop head to wind beside the committee boat and you tell me which side of the line is biased, and then off you go accelerating off the line!

For 2 hours, we practiced 2mn Starts and 1 lap race, again and again and again!

At the beginning, we felt like scary mice coming up to an unknown territory, but by the end, we felt like tigers, stalking our preys, we were all well aligned on the line, defending our position, luffing up one another, calling Starboard, pushing the boom on the other side to go back off the line... we all had the eyes of the tiger, we were hungry for Victory, and we would die for it!

Each time the gun went off, we all had already accelerating by bearing away, heeling the boat leeward, sheeting in and hicking hard like our lifes depended on it. Every single one of us wanted to round that windward mark first, it was like Kill or Be Killed!



Exhausted but happy and feeling like we could take over the world, we went back on shore for lunch to savour a very well prepared and very well needed lunch.

45mn later, we returned on the water to discover a new course: 3 marks aligned with the wind.

The exercise was going to be simple, deadly simple: We had to perform 5 tacks between each mark, do a 360 degree turn at the middle mark and round up the windward and leeward marks and keep doing this until we could do it blind folded!

So off we went!

All we could hear was the echoes of Damian's instructions in our heads. We practiced the perfect tack by a slow entry in the tack to keep good speed, we were light on the tiller and sheeting up a little to start the tack, moving our weight inside the boat to help the rotation as the wind started to push the luff of the sail on the other side of the mast, then we were healing the hull on the new leeward side in roll tack fashion before passing on the other side of the boat to hick and sheet in.

One part of our mind was thinking ahead, preparing, rehearsing our manoeuvres well before the marks to make sure the boat will be set before getting to the mark, resulting in:

- Easing off the outhaul, the kicker and the Cunningham before getting to the windward mark. The sheet was also well prepared to make sure it would slide without any problem allowing the perfect mark rounding and bare away, leaving us only to lift the centre board and to heel the boat to the opposite side of the boom to make it more stable and quicker.
- Similarly, we were preparing the boat before the leeward mark by tightening the outhaul, the kicker and the Cunningham and by pushing down the centre board.

The other part of our mind was to drive the boat fast, moving forward within the cockpit to keep the boat flat on the beat, block to block, hicking hard..., surfing the wave downwind, sheeting in a little and heating up a little, easing off the sheet and baring away to make the most of it.

Of course, Damian who wanted to make us practise and learn as much as possible had laid the marks in such a way that we had to gybe just before the leeward mark, making the manoeuvres rather challenging but also satisfying.

So, we practised sheeting in quickly with 2 hands to gybe, preventing the pulleys of the traveller to get stuck onto the transom, bloody F..ing pulley! We had to approach wide and exit tight on the leeward mark, this is what we needed to do and God is our witness, the Lord made sure we did it without losing any distance to the mark.

Similarly, Declan, the Formula 1 RIB pilot made sure that Damian was close enough to us so he would not miss a thing, allowing him to advise and push us to practice, to excell!

That brought an end to day one of the training.

We then went back on shore to share our successful and delightful day with one another, sharing our experiences, what we had learned, our failures and successes, all sitting in the Irish sun soothing our tired but exited minds and bodies, recovering by eating a delicious BBQ prepared by Shane nicknamed "Shane the Chef", all this washed down by a few well deserved pints!



The second day started with a Video session to watch the Top Worldwide Laser sailors and learn from them. With the previous day training practices, the information and advice provided by Damian, we were all able to understand, analyse and comment on what was going on in these videos.

The end of this video session marked the start of a rigging and sail set up on the green. Damian looked into a few boats and a 2 hands fast sheeting exercise session was performed by all. The pressure was on, everybody was watching and all sheeted in one after another like they never did before.

We then went for our last 3 hours session on the water to perfect what we had learnt the previous day. The session was more focused on individual needs to make sure we all sailed flat and fast on the beat and that we used every puff of wind in the downwind to optimise our speed!

We finally retired middle afternoon for a last session of debriefing and Q&As. Finally, the time came where we had to say our “Au revoir” to Damian, knowingly that we were hooked to Laser sailing forever!

**A special thanks to:**

- Peter for organising the training
- Declan for dealing with the infrastructure (RIB, marks...) which made Damian’s life easier, allowing him to focus on the training and the Q&As
- Shane The Chef for feeding us with high quality and energetic food

And finally, not to forget Damian who crossed the country to deliver a high quality training. This surely made us better sailor and showed us how much we can progress through training. This is why we have invited Damian for another session asap. We are very much looking forward to it!

See you soon Damian, from the Laser Monohull SSBC group!

