

GBR833 Louise Racing, representing the Royal Ocean Racing Club, has won the 2026 Marblehead Trophy in Cowes, concluding a historic first staging of the prestigious inter-club Dragon competition in the UK. An exceptionally close six-race series ended with an all-British Dragon podium, as GBR402 finished second and defending champion GBR192 Bluebottle took third.

Hosted by the Royal Yacht Squadron and supported by the Royal Yacht Britannia Trust, the 2026 Marblehead Trophy brought together 24 Dragon teams, each representing an individual yacht club, for three days of racing on the Solent from 23–25 August.

The event carried particular significance following Bluebottle's landmark victory in St Tropez in 2025. Racing on behalf of the Royal Yacht Squadron, Bluebottle became the first British challenge ever to win the Marblehead Trophy, bringing the competition to the UK for the first time in its history.

Close racing from the outset. Day One delivered sunshine, sparkling Solent waters and a light easterly breeze as the fleet headed towards the Lee-on-the-Solent shore for three opening races. Tide proved a major tactical factor throughout the day, with teams searching for gains into the windward marks and some pushing their advantage close enough to the shore to find the bottom.

The Vakaros RaceSense electronic start line management system was also in use, allowing the small number of OCS boats to quickly identify their position, return and restart.

GBR375 Blue Haze claimed the opening race victory, USA325 won Race Two and GBR833 Louise Racing took the final win of the day. After three races GBR402 led the 24-boat fleet by just one point, remarkably mirroring its position after the opening day of the 2025 edition.

The day's racing concluded with prizegiving at the Royal Yacht Britannia Trust's *Sailing Through Royal History* exhibition at Commodores House, where the race winners and leading Corinthian teams were celebrated.

With unfavourable weather preventing racing on Day Two, attention moved ashore as crews came together at the Royal Yacht Squadron Pavilion for drinks and dinner.

With three races still to complete, plans for the final day began early and the first start was brought forward to maximise the opportunity for racing.

The fleet headed to the East Knoll area of the Solent, where choppy seas and an easterly breeze of around 15–17 knots provided a very different challenge from the opening day.

Race Four got away on time, with the fleet quickly splitting across the first beat in search of the best tidal advantage. The race was dramatically reshaped on the second beat when the wind shifted approximately 40 degrees to the right, turning the final section of the course into a tight reach to the finish.

While the shift proved costly for some, GBR633 made the most of the change to secure the Race Four victory. The easterly breeze continued to build during the afternoon and the battle for the Trophy intensified. GBR192 Bluebottle took the win in Race Five before Sweden's SWE800 claimed the sixth and final race of the series.

For GBR833 Louise Racing, two second places in the final two races provided exactly the consistency required. Skipper Grant Gordon and his team secured the overall Marblehead Trophy title, becoming only the second British winners in the event's long history.

The closeness and quality of the competition was reflected throughout the final standings. Just one point separated GBR402 in second from 2025 winner GBR192 Bluebottle in third, while GBR375 Blue Haze and USA325 finished tied on points in fourth and fifth respectively.

The result completed a remarkable chapter for British Dragon sailing: after Bluebottle became the first British winner in 2025 and brought the Trophy to British waters for the first time, British Dragons occupied all three places on the 2026 overall podium.

Speaking at the prizegiving, winning skipper Grant Gordon said: "It is a huge honour to stand here on Squadron soil as winners of the Marblehead Trophy. To be here as a GBR team, and the second GBR team to win it, representing the Royal Ocean Racing Club – the first yacht club I joined more than 40 years ago – makes it particularly special.

"My first big thank you has to go to my crew, Charles, Julia and Ruairidh, and to the whole team for all the work they have done to help us win the Trophy. Thank you also to everyone on the water, the jury, Rob and the organising committee for the great job they have done, and most of all to all of the teams who came here to compete. We're now looking forward to the next edition in 2027."

Competition was equally strong within the Corinthian fleet. GER1151 Lilibeth, sailed by Magdalena Gründt and her four-person team, added another standout Corinthian race performance on the final day, alongside race successes for GBR767 and GBR753. Gründt and her team secured the overall Corinthian Marblehead Trophy title, with GBR753 finishing second and GBR748 third.

A historic Trophy continues its story. The Marblehead Trophy dates back to 1929, when it was presented by the people of Marblehead, Massachusetts, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the town's foundation. Its distinctive Deed of Gift allows any recognised yacht club to challenge through one nominated yacht, making it one of sailing's most unusual international inter-club competitions.

The inaugural competition was won by the Royal Swedish Yacht Club and the Trophy has been contested in Europe in the International Dragon Class since 1952.

Bluebottle's victory in St Tropez in November 2025 broke new ground as the first successful British challenge and meant that the Royal Yacht Squadron had the honour of hosting the Trophy in Cowes in 2026. The historic Dragon, maintained by the Royal Yacht Britannia Trust, returned to the podium

this year with third overall, while another British team now takes responsibility for the next chapter in the Trophy's story.

From a first British victory in 2025 to a first UK regatta and an all-British podium in 2026, the Marblehead Trophy's two-year association with Bluebottle and Cowes has created another significant chapter in the history of this remarkable international sailing trophy.

Overall Top Five

1. GBR833 Grant Gordon, Ruairidh Scott, Charles Nankin, Julia Stiles
2. GBR402 Pete Cooke, Torvar Mirsky, Frederico Melo
3. GBR192 Graham Bailey, Julia Bailey, Will Bedford, Killian Boag
4. GBR375 Ivan Bradbury, Lars Hendrikson, George Leonchuk
5. USA325 William Swigart, Pedro Andrade, David Cesear



Image mhead26d3-2342 – Louise Racing GBR833 Grant Gordon, Ruairidh Scott, Julia Stiles, Charles Nankin

Image mhead26d3-3214 - GER1151 Magdalena Gründt, Stefan Grundt, Mewes Wieduwild

Corinthian Top Three

1. GER1151 Magdalena Gründt, Stefan Grundt, Mewes Wieduwild
2. GBR753 Jono Brown, Chris Grosscurth, Emma York
3. GBR748 Dave Ross, Craig Dymock, Ade Padro



Image mhead26d3-3214 - GER1151 Magdalena Gründt, Stefan Grundt, Mewes Wieduwild

Images: Paul Wyeth

Cover Image 1mhead26d3-1786 – 23 Dragons from 13 nations completed six races of the Marblehead Trophy regatta