



PRESS RELEASE

New Excellence Programme in memory of Olympian John Merricks

Felpham Sailing Club 'Excellence Programme' chosen for JMST grant

The John Merricks Sailing Trust has selected Felpham Sailing Club to receive a significant grant to fund a legacy programme that memorialises and honours the enthusiasm of John Merricks. The Club is both delighted and proud to be selected for this prestigious project.

John Merricks was a leading Olympic sailor and 1996 Olympic silver medallist who died tragically in a van accident whilst competing in the 1997 Melges 24 European Championships in Italy.

The project will be titled the John Merricks Excellence Programme.

The vision is to provide a perpetual legacy in memory of John by encouraging young sailors aged 13 up to 25, to racing excellence. The programme will provide the sailors, and their families, access to a fleet of top quality ILCA (World Sailing Approved "Lasers") for use in training and racing at club and higher levels. For those that need some financial assistance, a Bursary Fund will also be available to help attendance at RTGs, Opens & Nationals.

The grant is for a total of £25,000.

£20,000 will go towards the purchase by the club of three ILCA dinghies complete with three World Sailing approved sails & rigs for the 4, 6 & 7 together with replica sails for training and racing at Club level. £5000 is to establish a Bursary Fund to help with part payment of costs for young sailors to attend open meetings/nationals for fuel and/or hotel costs. Particularly where they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford this.

The grant will be supported by funds from Felpham Sailing Club to initially top up the purchase of the ILCA dinghies. FSC will then also refresh the fleet with new ILCA dinghies every three or four years using the sale price plus further top up from club funds. Felpham Sailing Club will also cover maintenance charges and add to the Bursary Fund each year through hire charges, augmented by annual fundraising.

The JMST Excellence Programme will target young sailors who show excellence and perseverance and help families who might find it difficult to fund a teenager to be competent and competitive at National & International level. It will offer them competitive racing dinghies from

age 13 through to young adult using the ILCA4/6/7 as the means to support growth and progression.

The aim is to ensure the JMST grant becomes a self-sustaining Excellence Programme that will live on for many years; a Programme that pulls together a cycle of equipment refresh with a continuous flow of young people; one that will create a perpetual cycle of achievement stimulated by the training and coaching environment at Felpham Sailing Club.

Glenn Powell FSC Commodore said "Felpham Sailing Club is honoured to have been awarded this grant in memory of John Merricks. Our youth training programme is already at the highest standard and we are proud of our work supporting young sailors to improve and reach excellence both in racing and in themselves through sailing. This grant will help us to improve this support even further and to honour John Merricks by helping young sailors compete with the very best equipment at the very highest levels. An integral part of the Programme is to ensure it is funded and self-perpetuating for many years to come. We even see our task as one day helping create a future Olympian! We are grateful to the JMST for this extraordinary grant to enable us to do this."

Ruby (age 15) said "Thank you so much to the John Merricks sailing trust for selecting Felpham sailing club to receive this grant! This will allow so many of the young sailors at FSC to improve through sailing and racing it will encourage them to reach racing excellence. The purchase of the lasers is such an amazing opportunity for the club as it will allow lots of young sailors to experience sailing in boats with amazing equipment. This grant will mean so much to family's of fantastic young sailors, as it will help them to attend national or international competitions that they may not have been able to afford. I am looking forward to seeing how much this grant will help the club thrive and how it will impact the young sailors in the years to come. Thank you again to the John Merricks sailing trust for selecting our club for this amazing bursary and we are looking forward to the future of this great programme that honours the enthusiasm of John Merricks"

Josh (age 16) said: "This is an amazing opportunity that gives the perfect next step for the youth fleet at Felpham. With a vast amount of young sailors ambitious to race this gives us the best next step possible to boost the racers to regional and national level. This very generous bursary will continue John Merricks legacy for many years to come and continue to spread a passion for sailing"

Josie (age 15) said: As a current Ilca 4 RTG squad sailor, I think this scheme will be massively beneficial to upcoming sailors looking to develop their skills further. Having personally competed

in the Ilca class and benefitted from their high-level training I understand how important it can be to travel elsewhere. However, I also understand how difficult it can be to fund and support this yourself, so having access to a bursary would open up more opportunities for budding sailors. Having the chance to compete in a regional competition before having to buy an Ilca will allow upcoming racers to build up confidence and reassurance before purchasing one themselves. This support will also allow those already at a regional competition level progress to a national level. Finally, I believe this program will allow those at the highest level in the UK to compete at an even higher level, representing their country at European and international competitions, which is where we may see a future Olympian developed.

Photographs



John Merricks

Photo Credit: JMST



Photo Credit: Rooster



Photo Credit: Fiona James



Photo Credit: Fiona James



Photo credit: Josie Kelly



Notes to Editor:

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Felpham Sailing Club Website page for this programme:

<https://felphamsailingclub.co.uk/training/john-merricks-excellence-programme/>

The John Merricks Sailing Trust: <https://www.jmst.org.uk/about>



Felpham Sailing Club is located in the village of Felpham, approximately one mile east of Bognor Regis and about seven miles south-east of Chichester.

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