

Catch Me If You Can May 2026

The first Royal Harwich Yacht Club “Catch me if you can” pursuit event of 2026 took place on Saturday 23rd May to kick off a gloriously sunny bank holiday weekend.

Despite a number of regular entrants being away on bank holiday cruisers there were nine yachts lined up, ready for their individual start time at Clamp House on the Orwell for a start that was postponed by an hour in the hope of a sea breeze filling in given a very light forecast.

Unfortunately, the wind wasn't playing ball, and the fleet spent another 45 minutes under the AP flag whilst the event starter waited for wind. Some boats took the relaxed ethos of the event to its logical conclusion by picking up moorings and tucking into rather extravagant looking lunches whilst waiting for the flag to drop.

Eventually with a few catspaws on the water the first starter, Clambake (Oyster 26) got underway with barely enough wind to fill their spinnaker, before becoming becalmed just after the start line.

This set the scene for a challenging downwind start for the first few boats who just about had steerage way over the tide and took a very long time to cross the line with the second and third starters Poco Loco (Albin Cumulus 28) and Slippy (Dehler 31) trading places after their start signals and before they had both actually managed to cross the line.

The wind still had more tricks to play as the downriver breeze filled in a little for the later starters, compressing the fleet and reducing the handicap advantage for the earlier boats.

Three boats had elected to sail under spinnaker and had a brief advantage for the first 20 minutes or so until they were greeted by the sight of yachts running towards them upriver also under spinnaker, heralding the arrival of the sea breeze and some quick kite drops.

This meant a beat down the Orwell against the flood tide and against a slowly building sea breeze, which tended to favour some of the larger boats, with Islay (Delher 34) and Time off II (Bavaria 37) making gains over the fleet.

Rounding Shotley Horse into the Stour the spinnaker boats were again disappointed to be faced with the wind forward of the beam and too tight even for asymmetric boats. Time Off II and Islay were first round the turning mark in the Stour and made it back into the Orwell before the three-hour time limit elapsed with Time Off II taking the honours and Islay in second place.

Catch Me If You Can! May 2026 Report

Meanwhile another wind shift gave the following boats another beat back down the Stour with a close match between Safir (Hallberg-Rassy 342) and Clambake seeing the Oyster 26 claim third place.

Finally with the event over, the wind decided to give the fleet a break for the run back up to the Orwell to RHYC with sea-breeze and tide behind them with Slippy taking the opportunity to finally make proper use of the spinnaker!

The usual post-event debriefs took place on the club lawn in the blazing sun with Time Off II being awarded the much-coveted "I caught them all" engraved glassware (and an appropriate adjustment to their club handicap for the next race in the series).

An excellent start to the 2026 Catch-me-if-you-can series despite a challenging lack of wind at the start and also great to see some younger crew with several teenagers on board.

Catch me if you Can is intended to be a relaxed and accessible event for cruisers with a fun competitive element and the organisers were very pleased to receive the following feedback from new club members and first-time entrants Poco Loco:-

"Thanks to all for making us feel so welcome at our first CMIYC, the staggered start approach made it very easy for a first-time intro to racing without lots of boats stressfully milling around and it was a nice course to steer; even the wind got up nicely later in the day! Great fun and we will definitely be coming back, thanks again for the organisation!"

Jon



Catch Me If You Can! May 2026 Report

