



**A**s if to mark the last year of its sponsorship by Skandia, Cowes Week 2008 threw in just about everything it could think of. The wind blew hard enough to turn the iShares Extreme 40s on their heads. The rain came down like stair rods, but then almost guiltily, the sun came out to bring the spinnakers to life.

The numbers were as impressive as ever - 1,000 boats, 8,500 crew, and an estimated 100,000 spectators, though who counted them we are not sure.

Royalty gave its blessing in the form of Prince Philip, striding along the Parade like a man half his age, The Red Arrows performed as flawlessly as ever, and of course the fireworks were the usual grand finale. In an age where every garden party seems to have a firework display, it should be remembered that the Cowes display dates back at least 40 years that we have been watching it, and someone will no doubt tell us just how far back, yet it never fails to enthrall, lighting up the flotilla of boats dotting the water.

*Images clockwise from left: Green water, blue sky, and more than enough wind as yachts race under spinnakers; The Red Arrows have been part of Cowes Week for over 30 years.; Lookout, there's something behind you.; Shelley Jory, P1 Powerboat driver was just one of many celebrities on the water; Canons to the left, cannons to the right - the starting line under the Royal Yacht Squadron; Royalty in the person of Prince Philip, a Cowes Week regular; Crowds through the breakwater for the best view of the races; Disadvantaged kids racing as part of the Ellen Macarthur Trust; Up, up, and away. BMW Oracle Racing pitch-pole their Extreme 40 in the gusty conditions; And of course the fireworks provided their traditional finale.*

