

## Sailing legend to compete world' greatest powerboat race

**Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, the first sailor to circumnavigate the globe single-handed and non-stop on his yacht Suhaili in 1969, is teaming up with the world's top female powerboat champion, Shelley Jory to take on the longest and toughest one-day endurance powerboat race in the world, the Cowes-Torquay-Cowes on 29th August.**

Racing as **Team Scorpion** with *All at Sea* columnist Shelley as the driver, Sir Robin, an icon of the sailing world, chairman of Clipper Ventures and now aged 70, has never before experienced powerboat racing but jumped at the idea of being Shelley's Navigator when she first suggested it to him just a couple of weeks ago.

"When Shelley asked whether I would like to navigate for her in the Classic Cowes-Torquay-Cowes powerboat race, it took one second to accept. This is something I have not done before so naturally I want to find out what it is all about. This will be fun with the spice of competition," said Sir Robin.

Shelley, 39, is currently competing in the Powerboat P1 World Championships in the first all-female team to race at this level. So what prompted her to sign up for this race and then invite a total novice (to powerboat racing), to accompany her?

"I had this wild idea whilst preparing for my next P1 race that I really wanted to compete this year in my own country and what better race to do than the CTC. I knew I needed an excellent endurance boat and it was a no-brainer: it had to be a Scorpion. I have raced against record-breaking Scorpions such as Hot Lemon and Seahound for many years and I was very impressed with the way the all-girl team handled the Scorpion Dubois Sting in last year's Round Britain Powerboat Race," said Shelley.

She tracked down Patrick Byrne who owns Scorpion RIBs and they immediately hit it off. She knew she needed a good navigator and who better than the most famous navigator in the world with whom she had been sharing a BBC Radio studio over the past two years?

Shelley's co-presenter on BBC Radio Solent's Friday evening programme, H20, is Sir Robin Knox-Johnston. She admits that she wasn't at all confident that he would accept her 'off the wall' suggestion but Sir Robin agreed instantly and asked when they could start training!

Shelley added: *"So for my 14th consecutive Cowes powerboat race I have a very keen novice on board and the best endurance boat on the water to get us to Torquay and back."*

*Team Scorpion* is entering Motor Cruiser Class G (#R14) in a 10 metre Scorpion Sting, a RIB known for its excellent fuel economy, comfortable ride and ability to maintain a racing speed of around 50mph.

Shelley is feeling pretty confident about the team's chances in a fleet of 40-50 boats as this is the same model that successfully completed last year's Round Britain Powerboat Race as *Team Scorpion-Dubois* with Sarah Fraser and Miranda Knowles bringing the Sting *Rosy B* home in 12th place overall and 4th in class.

As Shelley quipped when asking Scorpion's M.D. Patrick Byrne if she could 'borrow' one to do this race, *"Scorpions seem to perform especially well for women drivers."*

Shelley has organised a tightly packed training schedule to get *Team Scorpion* fully up to speed, literally, with some calm and rough water racing in the Solent. The Team completed the 'Dunk Test' or HUET - Helicopter Underwater Escape Training - at Andark Diving last weekend

which, although not essential for this type of open canopied racing, is a definite safety procedure that all racers should take according to Shelley.

“You are put into a simulator in a swimming pool, turned upside down, drowned and taught how to survive and it really is a must for anyone playing or racing in fast boats,” she explained.

*Team Scorpion* will be equipped with Headcams to capture every heart-stopping moment of this endurance race as their boat hurtles across the water in the hands of its champion driver. The start is at 10am off the Royal Yacht Squadron in Cowes and, all being well, it shouldn't take them longer than three or four hours to complete the voyage and return to the safety of Cowes Harbour giving them plenty of time to get to the Prizegiving at the Royal Yacht Squadron at 6pm!

In addition to Scorpion RIBs who are providing the boat and necessary safety equipment and training opportunities, *Team Scorpion* would also like to thank Raymarine for their sponsorship and Sir Robin will be navigating the Sting using the Raymarine E120; Andark Diving and Watersports for the HUET (Dunk Test); Predator for the VX360 Headcams and DS Neptune Developments for the race helmet intercom system.

The Cowes-Torquay-Cowes race launched offshore powerboat racing as a sport in Britain in 1961. Initially sponsored by the *Daily Express* newspaper, its success encouraged several countries in Europe and the Middle East to follow suit.

It can claim to have introduced offshore powerboat racing to the rest of the world, outside the United States where the modern sport was launched with the first Miami-Nassau Race in 1956.

When the Union Internationale Motonautique, the world governing authority for powerboat racing, introduced the World Offshore Championship in 1967 as a memorial to Sam Griffith, the American founder of modern offshore racing, the course was found to be too short at 125 miles to qualify as a championship heat.

The race format was therefore changed and instead of finishing at Torquay, the fleet returned non-stop back to Cowes, a pattern that remains to this day.

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