

## Powerful dream for sailing legend Robin Knox-Johnston

Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, the first sailor to circumnavigate the globe single-handed and non-stop, is swapping wind power for horse power as he takes up speed boat racing.

By Sam Parkhouse

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The 70-year-old is competing in the longest one-day endurance powerboat event in the world, the gruelling 225 mile Cowes-Torquay-Cowes race.

Sir Robin, who has never raced a powerboat before, has teamed up with Shelley Jory, 39, a female champion, for the event this week.



Sir Robin Knox-Johnston is regarded as one of the greatest yachtsmen of all time Photo: PA

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The pair will be racing a 10m Scorpion Sting rigid inflatable boat (RIB), which has a top speed of 50mph.

Sir Robin Knox-Johnston is regarded as one of the greatest yachtsmen of all time after his exploits on his yacht Suhaili, in 1969, which he sailed around the world, non stop.

He remains the only Briton ever to have won a round the world race.

He said he was looking forward to the new, very physical, challenge of power boat racing.

"Bring it on. If we wrapped ourselves in cotton wool, life would be very dull and boring," he said. "Age is purely a calendar thing and it does not reflect ability. I can say Shelley and myself are not racing to come second.

"When Shelley asked whether I would like to join her, 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."

The pair have been testing their RIB off the south coast ahead of the race next Saturday.

"At very high speeds the sea is like concrete," Sir Robin said. "There is danger, but not the extreme danger of sailing in the Southern Ocean.

"The Scorpion slides through the water nicely but it is quite a jumpy ride."

Racing as Team Scorpion, Sir Robin will navigate the vessel, while Miss Jory pilots it.

The pair have built a friendship while working together for BBC Radio Solent.

In July Miss Jory, who also runs a family bridal business, became the first woman ever to win a Powerboat P1 Grand Prix.

She said: "Who better to have at your side than the most famous navigator in the world? For Robin the experience will be like being strapped in a Formula One car cockpit – certainly a baptism of fire.

"It will be hard push racing for about four hours solid. If Robin asks me he can go below for a tea break I will tell him 'shut up and concentrate'.

"It is an endurance event. We can hope to win our class."

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