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Round The Island Race

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Cowes-Torquay-Cowes: Shelley Jory & Sir Robin Knox-Johnston deliver marathon performance

Tuesday, 01 September 2009

On Saturday 29th August, the British powerboat racing champion Shelley Jory and her navigator, the sailing legend Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, racing as Team Scorpion, completed the gruelling Cowes-Torquay-Cowes classic, a 170-nautical mile endurance race, in their 10m Scorpion Sting RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat). The truly phenomenal news is that they achieved this feat in just over four hours. In doing so, Team Scorpion picked up fourth place overall and were first in their class, an incredible achievement given the extremely challenging weather conditions and the fact that Sir Robin had never before competed in a powerboat race.

At the evening prize giving ceremony held at the Royal Yacht Squadron in Cowes, Shelley was also awarded the Ladies Trophy by Lady Aitken whilst Sir Robin, aged 70, received the MEMA Trophy for being the oldest competitor. This is an award that he may not necessarily have chosen to win, but one that certainly adds to his already remarkable list of achievements! Shelley was also awarded the Motor Boat & Yachting Trophy for being the 4th placed driver.

The race started from the Solent under bright skies, but already choppy seas. As the fleet of twenty of the world's fastest powerboats picked up speed heading towards the Needles, the weather provided one of the toughest courses in recent times. Short choppy seas across Poole and Bournemouth Bay were followed by a big swell around Portland Bill and into the notoriously confused seas of Lyme Bay.

Competition was intense, with the lead changing a number of times. In the end the conditions proved just too much for some of the leading boats who fell by the wayside. Team Scorpion continued to battle on and made it back to the Cowes Yacht Haven to a great welcome. The crew was bruised and battered but elated.

As he stepped off the boat Sir Robin commented, "It was an interesting experience and one I won't forget. I will definitely be back next year – but as a spectator!"

Shelley added, "This was definitely one of the toughest endurance races I have ever done. I thought the boat was amazing and I have to pay tribute to Robin and the rest of the crew for their stamina and contribution to getting the boat back to Cowes".

Only nine out of the 20 boats that crossed the start line made it home; a superb testament to Team Scorpion's skills and to their RIB's endurance capabilities.

Cowes-Torquay-Cowes images:

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