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27

News



TOMMY VUYLSTEKE / SOLENT

British powerboat champion tells of lucky escape as race crash sends her co-driver flying overboard

Valletta The British powerboat champion Shelley Jory-Leigh had a remarkable escape from a crash in which her co-driver was flung into the air at 90mph.

Their boat hit a freak wave and nearly up-ended, catapulting Patrick Huybrechts, left, nearly 100ft into the sea and into the path of oncoming boats. Jory-Leigh, 40, was thrown around like a "rag doll" as Huybrechts, 53, crashed into his colleague's head before being thrown overboard.

Jory-Leigh radioed for help as the Belgian co-driver lay unconscious in the racing line. They were rescued and taken to hospital but neither was seriously injured.

"We are so very lucky we are still

both in one piece," said Jory-Leigh, the only woman pilot in the World Championship. "We were absolutely gunning it at the time. When I saw the video I was surprised I was walking and talking. It was shocking and frightening to watch. This was about as fast as you can have an accident."

The pair were competing on the third day in Valletta, Malta, for rounds three and four of the Powerboat GPS World Championship. The team, Spirit of Belgium, were in second place and expected to win the weekend event when disaster struck on lap nine of the 16-lap race. They are still in second place in the World Championship and will race in Sardinia next month.