

# The Daily Telegraph

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## The power and the glory

A 70mph dash across Southampton Water has co-pilot Gary King yelling for more

**T**he throb of the engine is deep, guttural, shaking me to the very core. I'm lodged low in the sunken seat with only my head protruding out of the cockpit. My line of vision is obscured by the giant turquoise bow that cuts through the water with the brutal efficiency of a shark. It's like sitting astride a missile with the countdown ticking.

I'm in Warsash, in Hampshire, with Britain's leading female powerboat racer, Shelley Jory (who is due to appear at the Schroders London Boat Show – for details, see below). She is in the seat to my right, hands on the steering wheel, as we negotiate our way out of the boatyard into Southampton Water. An instrument on the dashboard indicates we are doing less than 10mph. This is about to change.

Jory gives me a thumbs-up and in an instant the engine whines into deafening life. The acceleration is immediate and I'm forced back hard in my seat. The speedometer ticks steadily up to 60mph as we rip across the water. Vibrations crunch up through the hull and the wind lashes my face. I glance at Jory, who is wrestling with the wheel. She has the manic look of someone immersed in the thing that they adore, all wide eyes and crooked grin.

We slalom around the yellow mooring buoys and perform steep turns, gentle figure-of-eights and long, straight dashes. The Isle of Wight ferry slips upstream. Its foaming, choppy wake is too much of a temptation for Jory to ignore.



**‘She has the manic grin of someone immersed in the thing they adore, all wide eyes and crooked grin’**

Fast woman: Shelley Jory (above) and at full throttle (top)

We make a beeline for the waves fanning from its stern, hitting each with a crashing jolt that has the boat's front end twitching from side to side. My body is locked in my glass-fibre cocoon as I let out involuntary whoops and hollers. Suddenly, the power subsides and we cruise to a halt.

"Imagine that with 10 other boats around you, all trying to outwit one another – it's awesome," says Jory, grinning broadly. "There's nothing like it."

She competes in the Honda Formula 4-Stroke Series (HF4S) as part of the 225HP class. She caused quite a stir last year by coming third in what is very much a male-dominated sport.

"The men definitely wanted to beat me as soon as I started winning races in 2004," says Jory. "They would push harder for lines and markers, trying to force me out of the way. They see me as a threat, but that just drives me on.

I'm more determined than ever to do better in 2005." She steps down hard on the throttle and we pull away.

Today's excursion is to let me have a ride in the boat and also to test new equipment installed by the team of Honda mechanics that service, maintain and upgrade the HF4S fleet.

Although each of the teams own their craft – all Cougar-designed, deep-V monohulls – they have a warranty agreement with Honda, which means that the engine is repaired in the event of a breakdown. During race weekends, mechanics sometimes work all night to ensure a boat is operative for the next day's racing.

Jory has had a prototype power-steering system and a new propeller fitted and wants to see if they are going to make any difference to the speed and handling of her boat.

**T**ill just go as fast as I can. You keep your eye on the instrument panel and shout out our speed as it increases," she says. The V6 roars into life and again I'm rammed back in my seat. This time, the digital read-out zips straight up into the 60s.

I shout through the din: "63.7, 64.9, 65, 65.1." The numbers hold steady while Jory tinkers with a paddle switch on the steering column, altering the trim of the boat, changing its angle through the water by the tiniest of degrees.

I shout again: "65.4, 65.6, that's it, it's not going any higher." We power off and do a slow turn so

that we are now pointing back towards Southampton.

"We need to do two runs and then average them out to take into account the tide," says Jory.

At maximum throttle once again, the experience is completely absorbing. Nothing but the motor screaming, the water rushing by and my eye fixed on the speedometer.

It twitches up to 69.9mph and seems to stay there for an eternity before touching 70mph – and then we run out of water. An approaching pier stops approaching as we decelerate.

"Excellent, an average of 67.8, which is about an extra 3mph," she says, before adding: "Right, there's only one thing for it."

"What's that?" I ask.

"We'll do it again and see if we can go faster."

■ Shelley Jory is looking for a female navigator to partner her in Team Raymarine for the 2005 HF4S Series. If you are interested in racing next season, please email her at [shelley-jory@hotmail.com](mailto:shelley-jory@hotmail.com).

She will also be at the Schroders London Boat Show in association with 'The Daily Telegraph', which runs until January 16 at Excel in London's Docklands. Telegraph readers can save £3.50 on the price of standard adult and child tickets by booking in advance. Call 0870 060 0246 and quote

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