

Girls and their toys

Eight and a half grand. Now that would cover at least two boob jobs and leave a girl change for a pair of Manolo Blahniks. But the all-female, all-woman powerboat racing team of Shelley Jory and Libby Keir has a very different shopping list. Ingrid Abery reports.



With eight and a half K to spend, the only thing on Shelley and Libby's minds was a new hull for their sexy Honda 225 race boat. With the deal done, they are now set to pit their wits against the unyielding male competition of the powerboat racing circuit.

But they're not there to make up the numbers. These chicks are hoping to scoop some silverware this summer on the Honda Four-Stroke 225hp National Championship circuit. They want to kick some ass on this testosterone-fuelled stage.

Shelley Jory

33 year-old bridal store owner by day, Shelley moonlights as a powerboat racing driver. Having been on the racing circuit for some seven years she has clocked up podium finishes on the bat-winged V24 national circuit as well as claiming two event firsts and a third place overall in the Honda 225 Championships in her opening season last year.

Last October she literally ran away with five records during the Power Boat Records Week held on Lake Windermere. With wins

in the two and three hour endurance races she was the only woman even to take part in the event. Addicted to speed, she is now determined to lift a championship trophy.

Libby Keir

During the week 22 year-old Libby has her feet firmly on the ground as a London based media executive. Having graduated from Durham University in 2003 with a degree in Anthropology she then headed off for the bright lights of Sydney for a year.

"This is my first year in power boating. My father works for Honda (MD of Honda UK) and we have always attended motor sport events as a family. In the last few years, we have made a real point of coming to the F4S grand prix as the atmosphere was so much fun. My younger sister Kitty and

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All smiles for the Lady Racers

I have discussed the possibility of racing as a team, but currently her university commitments prevent her from putting the time required into it. However, we hope to race as a team at some point in the future."

Libby was introduced to Shelley, who at the time, was looking for a new female





Shelley Jory - quietly confident

navigator. "Shelley and I met up at the London Boat Show and a few days later, despite her best efforts to put me off, I asked if I could take the slot. I am really excited about the season and hope that I can help Shelley win some trophies. It is such a great contrast from my life in London during the week. Some people at work think I must be a bit drunk when I tell them what I'm doing." Not for long.

What a girl wants

For a new season a girl needs a new engine. Ten hours at 2500 revs gave them time to talk tactics. The result? A new hull. "We were chasing the stress cracks round the hull last year, so it was time for a new one." This pair is determined to beat the guys at their own game and lead the way for other all-female crews.

Getting started

Libby appears the perfect package - a very keen novice who could be taught correctly from the outset. Libby's Powerboat Levels 1 and 2 were a vital grounding for the sport. They have embarked on a series of training sessions with world titleholder Neil Holmes at Drivers Wharf in Southampton.

"On our first weekend we worked on succinct communication, and tackled corners and race strategy" said Jory. Her enthusiastic navigator added "On Bank holiday Monday it was like Piccadilly Circus out there but a good opening challenge." The girls will be seen racking up the hours in their turquoise beast on the Solent over the next few months.





Libby Keir - new girl on the block

Support


Raymarine saw a good package in the all-woman team and have signed them up for the next two years. Having said that there is plenty of extra maintenance to cover so the umbrella cocktails in the Seychelles will have to wait.

The thrill

But why spend £8.5K on a boat when a girl can do some serious retail therapy. "This world is so exhilarating with that edge of danger. It is exciting being out there on the start line up against 12 male teams, racing 60-miles over a three-mile course, reaching speeds of 70 to 80mph. That's a buzz" commented Jory.

Needless to say, being a team with the feminine touch makes for added interest on as well as off the racecourse. But apparently the new navigator's first weekend at the job scored "dix points". "If I had to go out and race with Libby tomorrow" concluded Shelley "I would." The series begins in May and runs until September. To catch a glimpse of the girlies on tour check out one of the following venues:

28/29 May > Largs
25/26 June > Isle of Man
16/17 July > Plymouth
20/21 August > Liverpool
10/11 September > Guernsey

Failing that they will grace our TV screens on Channel Four later in the season. Hopefully they'll be showing the boys that it was money well spent . . . 

www.honda-racing.co.uk/marine/hf4s