



1948-2014 - Celebrating 66 Years of Personal Endeavour

17 April 2014

Event Dates - 18/19 April in Devizes. 20 /21 April in Westminster

Race Website – www.dwrace.org.uk

All Go for 125 mile Devizes Westminster 2014

Over 660 kayakers and canoeists have entered the 2014 Devizes Westminster International Canoe Marathon. They'll all be attempting to paddle 125 miles from Devizes to Westminster over the Easter weekend (18-21 April) overcoming the demands of training in some of the toughest conditions over the winter. Crews that have put in the preparation could be in great shape to complete the 125-mile course in single and double kayaks and canoes.

With the forecast showing warm temperatures by day and flow on the lower canal and river conditions are looking good. Veteran DW commentator Paul Ralph, himself taking part in his 9th DW, says all we need is for the wind to move onto the west and we might have a really fast Easter.

Ralph says the Senior Doubles K2 has 5 or 6 boats in the mix, with his tip being boat 480 Steve and Rob King with "lots of DW experience and very quick when things get hard." Ralph says there are also two young senior crews who could do very well with a good junior track records as well as a lot of very solid paddlers who could all come through over the race.

Within the 203 Senior Doubles entrants is Sydney Olympics Rowing gold medallist Ben Hunt-Davis who entered DW a couple of years ago. "We made it to Reading in 2012 and that was it. Matt Parish and I have been paddling together since September and working very hard on becoming paddlers, not rowers who paddler."

Like all entrants Hunt-Davis and Parish have put in the hours. "We're members of Richmond Canoe Club and we've really enjoyed the training and the early mornings. I think we're in reasonable shape and have a reasonable plan. I'm looking forward to the race, I'm also really nervous." If the race goes to plan, they'll make it to Westminster around 9am on Easter Sunday morning.

Beyond the Senior Doubles, Ralph says K1 has a good field and it will be difficult to pick a favourite. There are lots of overseas paddlers with crews from Russia, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands and more. Eighteen nationalities make up the field. "It almost makes me wish I was watching," says Ralph.

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For everyone taking part a key challenge has been overcoming extremely demanding training conditions in what the Met office confirmed has been the wettest winter in England and Wales since records began in 1766.

For paddlers, flood conditions on rivers, canals and local stretches of water can lead to very hazardous conditions. The Kennet & Avon Canal has suffered greatly from the increased flow, and much of the River Thames has been unnavigable from December through to late February.

Only when the rain stopped falling and the conditions started to improve did race entries to Devizes Westminster 2014 start to come in and with the deadline on Sunday 6 April – 12 days before the start of the race on Good Friday – it looks like entry numbers will be close to record figures.

Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Marathon sets out from Devizes, heading along the Kennet & Avon Canal to Reading, then down the Thames to Teddington ending just downstream of Westminster Bridge.

The annual event is one of the toughest endurance events in the world. The non-stop race over 125-miles starts on Saturday 19 April. Non-stop means non-stop. No sleep, no rest, eating and drink entirely on the move. The fastest complete the course in around 17 hours, others will take around 24-hours, happy to have completed one of the toughest, open-to-all endurance races on the planet. The event takes canoeists to the limit of mental and physical endurance, battling against the steady and inevitable onset of physical depletion.

Junior, Senior, Veteran Doubles and Senior Singles take on the course over four-days, starting on the Friday 18 April, completing the course over four stages to finish on 21 April, Easter Monday. Open to anyone over 15 years of age – many schools take part – you'll need to train for at least six months if you're new to paddling.

For more information about Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Marathon or to follow the race online over the Easter weekend visit www.dwrace.org.uk

Additional press releases and information will be released in the days leading up to the start of the race. See <http://www.dwrace.org.uk/news.html> for details.

To film, photograph or record the film at any point along the course, details about crews, an interview or photographs please contact Peter Hutchison on at peterhutchison24@gmail.com or on 07736 424200.

Extended Quote from Ben Hunt-Davis

"I first heard about the DW when I was 14 or 15. I heard lots of stories about how hard it is and how you've got to be nuts to do. I always thought that I'd like to have a go. In 2012 I was asked by a friend 8 weeks before the race whether I would sub in for her partner. I got in a kayak for the first time, spend 3 week out of the country and forgot the stories that I'd heard about the race. We made it to Reading and that was it. This time I hope that it will be different.

Matt Parish and I have been paddling together since September. We've been working very hard on becoming paddlers. I don't want to be a rower who is paddling, I want to be a paddler. We're members of Richmond Canoe Club and loving it. I've really enjoyed the training, the early morning interval work and the long pieces on the canal and latterly the river. I think that we are paddling quite well, I think that we are in reasonable shape and I think that we have a reasonable plan. I'm really looking forward the race, I'm also really nervous. I hope that I our thorough preparation and respect of the event pays off and we get to Westminster at about 9am on Easter Sunday having had a fantastic experience."

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