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Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race 2015

PRESS RELEASE – 27 March 2015

Mixed crew poised to beat the men on canoeists' Everest

Britain's top male and female kayakers have teamed up to take on the 125 mile Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race this Easter and look set to beat the fastest all-male crews entered in the non-stop marathon epic.

Keith Moule of Chelmsford Canoe Club and Lizzie Broughton of Richmond Canoe Club have already set the fastest-ever mixed doubles times in the build-up series of four races held on the Kennet and Avon Canal, comfortably beating all the men's crews entered.

"If they succeed in winning the Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race as well, they'll be the first mixed crew ever to do so," said race director Martin Deaves. "We are set for a very exciting race, whatever happens."

Broughton is the current World silver medallist in canoe marathon while Moule, a former 200m specialist, has dominated selection races for the Great Britain team so far this year.

"I don't fear the race anymore," said Moule, who is no stranger to pushing the boundaries. "I often set myself unrealistic targets in training, then work as hard as I can to try and achieve them. I don't think anyone thought Lizzie and I, a mixed crew, would be the fastest crew overall on the build up races, beating the best mens crews, but we were."

The race also attracts its fair share of celebrities. This year Steve Backshall, Adventurer, TV Presenter the Deadly 60 and Strictly Come Dancing contestant will be paddling in a K2 with his partner George Barnicoat from Falcon Canoe Club in Oxford. They're aiming to finish in less than 20 hours in the non-stop race.

Catching up with Steve, who started training after finishing on Strictly, he said: "Training has been going really well since January. I have done the race before, but never tried to do in such a fast time. The last time I did it, I remember stopping for a three course dinner, a hot shower and chatting to supporters all the way down the course. This year will be totally different and who knows how we will both cope in the early hours, after no sleep and hours of paddling."

A Long Standing Record

It is possible, if the weather conditions prove favourable, that Moule and Broughton could break the 37 year old course record for the event. The record of 15 hours 34 minutes and was set by Brian Greenham and Tim Cornish of Reading Canoe Club in 1979.

Tim Cornish, current record holder, when asked about their long-standing record going to a mixed crew replied: "I don't know Lizzie and Keith personally, but I wish them the best for their record attempt. The times

they have been doing certainly put them in with a great shout of the DW record. It's great to see paddlers of their calibre giving the DW a full go."

The race is also hotly contested by canoe clubs around the country. Clubs enter multiple crews with the aim of picking up the coveted team trophies. Richmond Canoe Club in south west London and Fowey Canoe Club in Cornwall will be battling it out again this year. In 2014 Fowey was the first club since 1955 to win both the junior and the senior team prizes. Brian Greenaway, Fowey's kayak racing coach said of his paddlers: "I've trained many canoeists across the UK for many years, but I particularly like training the Cornish, they'd never not finish a race and always give their all. One time a crew actually damaged their boat, so they just go out. Put their boat on their shoulder and ran the rest of the race."

Details of the races:

First held in 1948, the Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race, or "DW", is often described as "the canoeist's Everest". Starting in Devizes, Wiltshire and finishing downstream of Westminster Bridge in central London, the race is 125 miles long and passes 77 locks which competitors must portage. The first 52 miles are along the Kennet and Avon Canal to Reading, the next 55 miles are on the River Thames to Teddington. The final 17 mile section is on the tidal portion of the Thames.

More than 600 competitors, racing open canoes or kayaks, are entered in this year's race over Easter Weekend. The Senior Doubles race – in which competitors complete the 125 miles without stopping for anything – starts on Easter Saturday (4 March). The fastest finishers will arrive at Westminster Bridge around 06:30 on Easter Sunday.

A four-day stages race also takes place over the Easter weekend starting on Good Friday (3 March) finishing at Westminster from 06:45 on Easter Monday (6 April). The four classes include Junior Doubles (Under 19s), Senior Singles, Junior-Senior Doubles and Endeavour Doubles (non-competitive Senior Doubles).

Press Contacts

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