



1948-2009 - Celebrating 61 Years of Personal Endeavour

6 April 2009

Olympian and Record Holders Take on DW2009

Olympian rower James Cracknell and current holders of the 30-year old record Brian Greenham and Tim Cornish will be taking on the massive challenge of Devizes Westminster 2009 over the Easter Weekend – the longest non-stop kayaking event in the world.

Over 600 paddlers will start the 125-mile course in Devizes on Easter Saturday, aiming to make it to Westminster without stopping. Many competitors will be looking to complete the course in less than 24 hours, fighting fatigue and, as they paddle through the night, sleep to complete the course in the early hours of Easter Sunday morning.

The kayaking world will be watching with interest as double Olympian gold medallist James Cracknell switches from a rowing boat to a kayak to try and break the 24-hour schedule.

The return of Greenham and Cornish, holders of the current course record of 15 hours and 34 minute will also create strong interest, as young pretenders seek to emulate the times of Greenham and Cornish who are now nearing pensionable age. The thirty year old time is one of the longest standing records in sport for an annual event, particularly impressive accounting for improvements in kit, training techniques and the state of the canal along the course.

Reflecting on the coming race, Course Chairman and Chief DW Pundit Paul Ralph said, "This is going to be awesome, the best race we've had in years. The old boys are still faster on the water than the youngsters so it's going to be interesting to see who wins."

The event takes canoeists to the limit of mental and physical endurance – battling the steady and inevitable onset of physical depletion. The Blue Riband event is the non-stop race. A four-day staged race, allowing juniors to take part, is equally demanding, starting on Good Friday (10 April), completing the course over four gruelling stages to finish on 13 April, Easter Monday.

Previous participants include Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Donal MacIntyre, Rebecca Stephens (1st British Woman to Summit Everest), Lord Paddy Ashdown and Guin Batten (Sydney Olympics Team GB Rowing Silver Medallist). All acknowledge the event as one of the toughest events in the British calendar.

Not that anyone does DW for charity, last year – our 60th anniversary – competitors raised over £124,000 in funds for charity.

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

For more information, interviews or photographs contact Peter Hutchison on peter.hutchison@ukonline.co.uk or 07736 424200.

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