



## **1948-2012 - Celebrating 64 Years of Personal Endeavour**

April 2012

### **Devizes Westminster 2012 Celebrates A Tough Race**

One third of crews retired from the 2012 Devizes Westminster International Canoe Marathon as the 125-mile endurance race once again proved to be one of the toughest endurance events in the world.

Richard Hendron and James King won the Senior Doubles in a time of 17 hours and 58 minutes, completing a hat trick of wins for the pair, a feat only achieved twice before in the 64 year history of the race. Hendron, notching up his fifth race win overall, said the victory was "painful due to the lack of flow on the river", referring to the dry weather of recent months. King, celebrating a 4<sup>th</sup> senior doubles win, said the race was "surprisingly nice".

Conditions were reasonable over the weekend. Temperatures were slightly colder than ideal with a gentle wind and no rain. The main challenge was the slow river flow on the Thames, reducing the assistance from moving water. Even benevolent conditions take their toll in the non-stop race, with 44 of the 155 Senior Doubles crews retiring with several top performing crews misjudging the conditions.

Devizes Westminster is rarely kind to newcomers, with the course forcing the retirement of Olympic rowing legend Sir Steve Redgrave and partner Roger Hatfield. The team left the course at Dorney, just upstream of Windsor after 16 hours 35 minutes and 87 miles due to tiredness. Other Olympians taking on DW suffered a similar fate. Ben Hunt-Davis and Sarah Winckless retired on 15 hours 45 minutes, with Kate Mackenzie and partner Olly Shaw leaving the river at Marlow after 18 hours 22 minutes.

It's a punishing combination of fitness, endurance and race planning mixed with highly variable and unpredictable conditions that meddle with well-laid plans. DW Senior Doubles is one of the longest non-stop kayaking races in the world. The event takes canoeists to the limit of mental and physical endurance, battling against the steady and inevitable onset of physical depletion.

The Four Day Stages race follows the same course along the Kennet & Avon Canal to Reading and then down the River Thames to Westminster.

Junior Doubles winners Michael Southey and Connor Peters finished in 17 hours 22 minutes over four days. After finishing second for the last two years, a smiling Southey said it was a "good race, that went well," despite nearly collapsing at Marsh (60 miles).

Senior Singles also compete over four stages, with Jan Laeanen of Belgium coming home first in a time of 17 hours and 14 minutes.

DW, as the race is known in kayaking circles, has two-person crews teaming up to complete the gruelling 125-mile race. Leaving Devizes in Wiltshire on Easter Saturday, competitors paddle day and night without stopping to reach the finish line by Westminster Bridge in central London. Held annually since 1948, DW demands intense training and preparation for up to six months. In total over 500 people in single and double kayaks are expected to take part in the 2012 race.

The course is a great journey through the heart of southern England. Devizes 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.

For full results visit <http://www.dwrace.org.uk/results/2012/Results/results.html>

For more information about Devizes Westminster International Canoe Marathon visit [www.dwrace.org.uk](http://www.dwrace.org.uk). A Press Pack is available on the website.

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