

Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Five Nations to contest Blind Match Racing Championship

Seven teams from five nations will compete at the IFDS Disabled Sailing International Championship, 2011, Homerus Blind Match Racing. RPYC will host the event with racing on the Swan River from March 19 to 26.

Italy's Luigi Bertanza, winning helmsman in the 2010 IFDS Blind Match Racing World Championships on Lake Garda, has teamed with Alessandro Malapiero and Elisabetta Bardella for the Perth event. Malapiero and Bardella were second placed in the B2 division of the 2010 championship. The Italian Homerus organisation has developed the Autonomous Blind Match Racing discipline and has enabled this team to build their training and competition experience over several years.

The UK have two teams competing. Winners of the B2 division of the 2010 championship on Lake Garda, Lucy Hodges and Toby Davey, have been joined by Sharon Grennan on the helm. This is another experienced crew, with Hodges on the podium at the 2009 IFDS Blind Sailing World Championships in the fleet racing discipline. Vicki Sheen, Nicholas Dunnini and Dennis Mannering are the second UK team – another group of seasoned competitors.

As a helmsperson, New Zealand's Paulien Eitjes has won Homerus International Match Racing Championships in 2007 and 2008, and claimed the B2 division of the 2009 IFDS Blind Sailing World Championships in Rotorua. She is moving to the mainsheet for the 2011 Match Racing Worlds with Russell Lowry on the helm and Tom Donaghy on headsail.

The local Perth team, helmed by Kylie Forth, with Ryan Honschooten on main and Erin McGlew on headsail will be sailing with less than maximum points – with two B1 and one B2 classified sailor aboard. The twenty-five year old Forth, who is also an above-knee amputee, has been steadily moving up the rankings since taking the helm for the first time in 2007. Their familiarity with the Sonar and the local conditions should be an advantage. Paul Borg, winner of the Homerus International Match Racing Championships in 2005 and 2006, has assembled a second Australian team with Craig Gordon on helm and Joan Andrews on main.

Manuel Gimeno Ugarte and Federic Albir from Spain defeated Forth and McGlew in the petit finals at the IFDS Blind Match Racing World Championships on Lake Garda last year. Ugarte has also been improving his ranking over recent years and will be in Perth to keep the momentum going.

The IFDS Blind Match Racing Championship will be sailed in Sonar keelboats using the Homerus Autonomous Sailing system. Three acoustic buoys, each with a unique signal, define the course and boats have their own sound signal that changes when on port or starboard tack.

A crew of three sailors classified as B1, B2 or B3 under the IBSA Classification System will make-up teams with a collective maximum of 5 IBSA points. The helmsperson must be classification B1

and the gender is mixed, with a minimum of one female and one male team member. A sighted observer appointed by the race committee is also aboard.

Appendix CBS (Appendix C for Blind Sailing) has been developed for the ISAF Racing Rules of Sailing to accommodate the specific needs of this sailor group. The event will be ISAF Graded and many of the blind sailors are already included within the ISAF sailor match race rankings.

The Championship will be the first sailed in the new three person format, and that may provide some surprises. It will certainly offer some world class racing at a magnificent venue.

For more information about the event, visit www.rpyc.com.au/index.php?id=121

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