

## RYA Press Release

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John Merricks II in action. © Paul Wyeth [www.pwpictures.com](http://www.pwpictures.com) / RYA

### Crew selected for John Merricks II Fastnet bid

Fourteen young keelboat sailors are celebrating after earning their call-up for this year's Rolex Fastnet Race as the crew of the RYA-run TP52 John Merricks II.

The fourteen, plus skipper Luke McCarthy, will embark upon the famous 608-mile offshore challenge, which departs from Cowes on Sunday 9 August, and have earned their berths through a combination of training and races, teamwork, how well they cope with the challenges of offshore sailing, as well as their fitness and commitment with the upkeep and maintenance of the boat.

Five of the crew – skipper McCarthy, Nick Cherry, Scott Millar, Ben Pym and Sally Olsen – were involved with the 2007 Rolex Fastnet Race, one of the toughest in living memory where just 51 of the 300 boats entered were able to complete the race due to rough seas and appalling weather.

This year, the crew of John Merricks II is a mix of youth and experience with the five Fastnet 'veterans' joined by five sailors – Chris Noble, Ed Dyer, Becky Scott, Peter Cowell and Phil Miller – who, despite having only joined the RYA Keelboat Programme in 2008, have already shown all the skills and attributes required to be part of a successful offshore campaign.

The selected crew members have all been involved in ISAF Offshore safety training in preparation for the race.

“The crew has been selected by myself and Luke McCarthy as skipper, with input from others closely involved with the boat,” explained RYA Racing Manager John Derbyshire.

“We’ve had some difficult decisions to make, but we’re delighted with the team and confident that the blend of skills and personalities are what’s needed to have an effective team which can compete with distinction at the Rolex Fastnet Race.”

Derbyshire continued: “Those who have unfortunately missed out on selection we are trying to place on other boats and hope that their enthusiasm continues.”

All involved with the campaign, and Phil Miller in particular as boat captain, have invested many hours in preparing and maintaining the boat during the 2009 season, in which John Merricks II has already won the IRC Super Zero Class at the Cervantes Trophy, took line honours and finished third overall in the Myth of Malham, and second in class at the Red Funnel Easter Regatta.

But despite the boat’s early season success, skipper McCarthy is aware that conditions could make it tough going for the crew as they embark on their Rolex Fastnet challenge.

“The event is so condition dependent, overall you never know where you’re going to finish,” he explained.

“There are a number of other TP52s entered so we’ll mostly focus on how we fare against them – we’ve had a good tussle with Cutting Edge this season, plus there’s an American TP called Lucky, and also the Farr 52 Chernikeef 2 to contend with, which is crewed by another group of young sailors.

“We’ve got a hugely talented group, both in terms of their sailing ability but also the other skills they bring to the mix,” McCarthy continued. “For many on the John Merricks II crew this is the culmination of three years of hard work, but also for those newcomers to the Programme it just goes to show how far you can come in six to nine months with the right skills and dedication.”

**John Merricks II crew for the 2009 Rolex Fastnet Race:**

Skipper/navigator – Luke McCarthy (from Brighton; now lives Southampton)  
Helm – Tom Smedley (Portsmouth)  
Helm – Nick Cherry (Birmingham; now Southampton)  
Trim/helm – Scott Millar (N. Ireland)  
Trim/helm – Ben Pym (Cardiff)  
Trim – Chris Noble (Glasgow)  
Trim/helm – Josh Rumbol (Poole)  
Trim – Sally Olsen (Devon)  
Trim/grind – Ed Dyer (Reading)  
Pit/trim – Tim Jestico (London)  
Trim/pit – Becky Scott (Helensburgh)  
Trim/sewer – Hester Robertson (Edinburgh)  
Mast/grind – Rich Graham (Southampton)  
Bow/trim – Peter Cowell (Shropshire)  
Bow – Phil Miller (Southampton)

**Ends**

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