



RYA Press Release

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Ayton makes surprise comeback for Miami regatta

The 2010 sailing World Cup series kicks off in earnest this week with some of Britain's top sailors among the 640-strong entry for the Rolex Miami Olympic Classes Regatta (25-30 January).

Some 45 Skandia Team GBR sailors across 12 classes will be in action out in Biscayne Bay, including RS:X World Champion Nick Dempsey and SKUD World Champions Alexandra Rickham and Niki Birrell, with an unexpected entry from Yngling Olympic Champion Sarah Ayton.

Making a surprise appearance alongside Saskia Clark in the women's 470 event is the double Olympic gold medallist, who's stepped in in place of Pippa Wilson at this event.

Ayton has not raced since her 2008 Olympic triumph after taking time out to have a baby – but with Wilson having returned home for personal reasons, the opportunity emerged for Ayton to race in Miami with Clark, GBR's hugely experienced Olympic 470 crew.

Sailing for the first time since the Beijing Games, Ayton is sure to be taking a close interest in her competition as she looks to determine whether the 470 is the class for her in her 2012 campaign.

"It's been a while, but I really enjoy sailing in Miami and it'll be fun to race with Sas this week at an event which is all about learning and where there's no pressure or expectation on me to deliver a result!"

The Miami regatta also kicks off the first full season of competition in the new Elliot 6m women's match racing boats, with Skandia Team GBR's World Cup series winners Lucy Macgregor, Annie Lush and Ally Martin looking to lead the way this week.

Macgregor and her team won bronze racing in Laser SB3s at last year's Miami event, and although they're happy with their preparations in the Elliot 6m keelboats, they're not underestimating their competition.

"It'll be quite interesting in terms of our rivals this week," Macgregor observed.

"A lot of people have been away now and spent a bit of time in the boats and have been getting used to them, so I don't think anyone really knows who are going to be the ones to watch.

“The Americans have been working really hard, as have the French and the Dutch, so I think it could be a really close regatta.”

Britain’s Katie Archer, Nicky Muller and Lauren Martel will also compete in the women’s match racing event.

Luke Patience-Stuart Bithell and Olympic bronze medal-winning windsurfer Bryony Shaw can be confident in their form heading into the World Cup event, having just won warm-up regattas – the North American Championships – in their respective 470 and RS:X classes.

The 2009 World Cup series winners Nick Thompson (Laser), Ed Wright (Finn), and John Robertson’s crew in the Paralympic Sonar class, who made it a golden hat-trick for Skandia Team GBR at last year’s edition of this event, will also be in action this week.

Robertson, along with Hannah Stodel and Stephen Thomas, has been clocking up the training hours in Miami ahead of the regatta.

“Our preparation has been really good for the OCR,” explained Robertson.

“We missed quite a few days’ training back in Portland just because the weather has been rubbish as it’s been too cold, so to get here and to get two and a half weeks of pretty good sailing in has been really valuable for us.

“The level of competition [in the Sonar fleet] is really good at the moment. All the good guys are here, including the World and Paralympic Champions, so there will be some top boats for us to contend with”.

The Rolex Miami Olympic Classes Regatta – the second leg of the 2009-10 ISAF Sailing World Cup series – runs until Saturday 30 January. Follow all the action at www.skandiateamgbr.com

Skandia Team GBR line-up for 2010 Rolex Miami Olympic Classes Regatta:

Laser

Nick Thompson
Rob Godwin

Laser Radial

Charlotte Dobson
Andrea Brewster
Alison Young

Finn

Ed Wright
Giles Scott
Andrew Mills
Mark Andrews

470 Men

Nick Rogers-Pom Green
Nic Asher-Elliot Willis
Luke Patience-Stuart Bithell
Phil Sparks-Chris Grube

470 Women

Penny Clark-Katrina Hughes
Sarah Ayton-Saskia Clark

49er

Dave Evans-Ed Powys

RS:X Men

Nick Dempsey
Elliot Carney

RS:X Women

Bryony Shaw

Women's Match Racing (Elliot 6m)

Lucy Macgregor-Annie Lush-Ally Martin
Katie Archer-Nicky Muller-Lauren Martel

2.4mR

Helena Lucas
Megan Pascoe

SKUD-18

Alexandra Rickham-Niki Birrell

Sonar

John Robertson-Hannah Stodel-Stephen Thomas

ENDS

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