



## Press Release

23 June 2011



J80s in action at the RORC Easter Challenge Regatta Credit: Paul Wyeth/RYA

### **British Keelboat Academy to take on Round the Island Race Challenge**

A selection of the British Keelboat Academy's finest members are preparing to take to the waters of the Solent this weekend (25-26 June) alongside an estimated 1,700 boats and a staggering 16,000 other sailors for the 80th anniversary of the J.P. Morgan Asset Management Round the Island Race.

The BKA, the joint keelboat racing initiative between the RYA and UKSA, are entering one of their J80's which will be skippered by one of the team's youngest but most promising sailors Robin Elsey, who is also set to race in the Rolex Fastnet Race (14 August), one of yachting's greatest offshore races. Elsey will be joined by BKA crew members Suzy Russell, Lizzy Foreman and Paul Harsent, for what will be their first time competing in the J.P. Morgan Asset Management Round the Island Race.

The BKA members have been training hard as part of the academy programme over the past few months in preparation for one of the biggest events in the sailing calendar. Elsey and his crew, who recently finished second in the J80 class at the RORC Easter Challenge Regatta, have been receiving expert coaching from RYA qualified Keelboat coaches as well

as gaining valuable skills and experience in order for them to put their campaign together.

John Derbyshire, RYA Racing Manager, said: "The annual J.P. Morgan Asset Management Round the Island Race is one of the largest yacht races in the world and the fourth largest participation sporting event in the UK, attracting competitors from all over the UK, Europe and as far as the USA and Australia. The race will be a great opportunity for the BKA sailors to gain a real taste of top level competition as they take to the waters with some of the worlds most renowned sailors, including triple Olympic gold and silver medallist Ben Ainslie."

BKA sailor Eley, J80 Skipper from Falmouth, Cornwall, commented: "With this being the crew's first time in the race we are all looking forward to just competing in one of the world's biggest yacht races. Each crew member brings a different skill set making us a competitive boat and with the results we have had as individuals and as a crew should put us in good stead for a high placing overall.

Eley concluded: "The BKA have been fantastic in helping us put this campaign together through giving us the opportunity to train over the winter months and giving us use of the boats when competing in regattas. There has been a lot of organisation from all crew members from sorting the boats to arranging the entry for the race which all contributes to our knowledge and experience for future campaigns."

Russell, BKA and J80 crew member from Oxfordshire, said: "As it's our first time in the race obviously our number one target is to complete the race safely! At present there are 14 J80s entered and from our previous experiences it is very tight and exciting racing. To finish in the top 5 would be a great achievement for us."

"This campaign so far has taught us the importance of taking responsibility. It has primarily been down to us to make the campaign happen, Luke McCarthy and Phil Johnston have been a great help throughout our planning, offering us useful advice and setting us deadlines. The BKA has given us the support, confidence and inspiration to compete in such a prestigious event," explained Russell.

In addition to the BKA's J80, a number of other sailors from the RYA and UKSA joint Keelboat racing initiative will also be setting sail from the famous Royal Yacht Squadron line in Cowes come Sunday, including Peter Knight and Aaron Cooper who will be crewing Niall Dowling's 'Arabella' - the latest new design to come from J boats, James Brown crewing 'Magical Mystery Tour' Swan 42, James French on 'Bob' Farr 52 and Neil Payne who will be on-board 'Rebel' Farr 45.

The BKA's sponsors include X-Ray at 77 and Group Dental, plus a number of generous supporters and suppliers. For more information about the British Keelboat Academy and how you can help with fundraising, please visit the BKA website at [www.britishkeelboatacademy.org](http://www.britishkeelboatacademy.org), or follow the BKA on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/BritishKeelboatAcademy](https://www.facebook.com/BritishKeelboatAcademy) or on Twitter (@tweetbka).

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**J80 at the RORC Easter Challenge Regatta**  
Credit: Paul Wyeth/RYA



**UKSA J80 crew for Round the Island Race** Credit: Paul Wyeth/RYA