



Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race 2019

PRESS RELEASE

Injured Military Veterans take on all-comers in 125 mile Easter canoe epic

London, 16 April 2019 – Dozens of British Armed Forces personnel and military veterans will take part in the annual Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race this Easter, organisers of the world's toughest non-stop canoe race confirmed today.

More than 650 canoeists from elite athletes to club paddlers will take part in the “DW” canoe race, one of the world's toughest endurance events and sees competitors racing from Devizes in rural Wiltshire to Westminster Bridge in Central London over the Easter weekend.

Elite canoeists from the Royal Marines and numerous Army regiments, including the Royal Engineers, will take part in the race, some in slim racing kayaks and others in the folding canoes used by military units since the Second World War.

Competing this year are former Royal Marines Jonathan White and Lee Waters. Jonathan was injured by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) while serving as a captain with 40 Commando Royal Marines on Operation HERRICK in Afghanistan in 2010. As a result of his injuries, he lost both legs above the knee and his right arm at the elbow.

His kayak partner is CSgt Lee Waters who was Jonathan's Troop Sergeant in Afghanistan and was also injured, receiving multiple gunshot wounds to the face, hand and ankle.

The paddlers, who previously completed the race in 2012 in a time of 28 hours and 8 minutes, are supporting the Royal Marines Association Charity, which assists ex-servicemen and women.

(A video of Jonathan's incredible past fund-raising activities can be seen online here: <https://theroyalmarinescharity.org.uk/news/jon-white-support-through-life/>)

“We're into the last few days of preparation,” says Jonathan, adding: “It's going to be brutal.”

“The race has long been a staple part of military endeavour and this year is no exception. We're thrilled to see so many representatives of the Armed Forces, both past and present,” said Race Director Gareth Scragg. “The determination shown by veterans like Jon White is an example to everyone about the triumph of the human spirit.”

Competitors must time their departure from Devizes on Easter Saturday (20 April) to reach Teddington Lock in time for the early morning tide the following day. The first

entrants in the non-stop race reach Westminster early on Easter Sunday. Competitors carry tracking devices and boats can be followed at online at www.dwrace.co.uk

About the Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race

The annual Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race is the world's longest non-stop canoe race. Frequently referred to simply as DW, the race starts in Devizes, Wiltshire, and follows the Kennet & Avon Canal to join the Thames at Reading. The finish is in the heart of London at Westminster Bridge. Covering the 125-mile distance in kayaks or canoes, DW is one of the toughest endurance events in the world and is open to anyone with the necessary determination and commitment to train for it.

DW takes place over the Easter Weekend every year. More than 500 volunteers and organisations, including the Canal and Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency and the Port of London Authority, give their support to DW either directly or indirectly.

The non-stop Senior Doubles event starts at 7am on Easter Saturday, 20 April. Completing the non-stop race is a colossal achievement. Most paddlers will take about 24 hours to complete the course, not stopping to eat, sleep or rest.

Alternatively, the race can be tackled in 4 stages starting on Easter Friday and finishing on Easter Monday. Competitors in the stages races (Junior Doubles, Senior Singles, Veteran/Junior, and Endeavour) leave Devizes on Good Friday, 19 April, from 7am.

The race started as a wager in a pub in 1948. Seventy years on, it has grown into a firm fixture in the world's canoeing calendar that is open to all comers. Previous competitors include Regular and Special Forces representatives, elite athletes including Olympic rowing medalists James Cracknell, Ben Hunt-Davis, and Guin Batten, plus the explorer and adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes. TV presenter Steve Backshall raced with his wife, Olympic rower Helen Glover. All rate this as one of the toughest events for mind and body.

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You can follow DW on Facebook ([Facebook.com/DWcanoerace](https://www.facebook.com/DWcanoerace)) and on Twitter ([Twitter.com/DWcanoerace](https://www.twitter.com/DWcanoerace))

The event website is www.dwrace.co.uk

High-resolution images can be provided on request.

Jonathan White is on Twitter: www.twitter.com/jonwhite50