



Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race 2019

PRESS RELEASE

Team GB paddlers aim for Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race win

London, 16 April 2019 – Keith Moule of Chelmsford Canoe Club and Tom Sharpe of Richmond Canoe Club, both members of the Great Britain canoeing team, are aiming for victory in the annual Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race this Easter.

The duo, who have raced internationally for the past six years, hope to beat more than 600 other competitors from around the world and win the 125 mile, non-stop canoe race, seen as one of the world's toughest endurance events.

Moule, 38, and Sharpe, 29, must time their departure from Devizes on Easter Saturday (20 April) to reach Teddington Lock in south-west London around 0530 on Easter Sunday in time for the ebb tide to speed them to the finish at Westminster Bridge.

“We race well together and we’re ambitious, but also confident that we can win,” said Sharpe, who works as a financial analyst with the accountants KPMG in his day job. “Of course, it’s a long way and anything can happen, but we think we’re up for the challenge.”

Moule, who is operations director at a medical journal when not racing, previously won the race with fellow GB athlete Lizzie Broughton in 2015, the first time a mixed crew has ever won the Devizes to Westminster race.

The race attracts entrants ranging from club paddlers to international athletes and members of the Armed Forces. Every year hundreds attempt the race but around one-third fail to finish, often defeated by the sheer effort of paddling for around 24 hours and portaging kit-laden boats around 77 locks on the Kennet & Avon canal and the Thames.

The course record of 15 hours 34 minutes was set 40 years ago in 1979 by Tim Cornish and Brian Greenham of Reading Canoe Club. Breaking the record requires good river conditions and although Moule and Sharpe are in good physical shape, the lack of flow on the Thames means a sub-16 hour run is unlikely.

“After 40 years we hope that the record will one day be broken,” said Race Director Gareth Scragg. “It requires a combination of elite-level athlete and significant flow. The lack of rain means it is uncertain, but with two paddlers of this calibre, I would not bet against it.”

Competitors carry tracking devices and 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 Devises 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 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://twitter.com/DWcanoerace))

The event website is www.dwrace.co.uk

High-resolution images can be provided on request.