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Ready to do Battle at Quantum Key West 2013

--- More than a Thousand Sailors Prepared for 26th Anniversary Regatta

Key West, Fla - All the docks around the Conch Republic were alive with activity and anticipation on Sunday as more than a thousand sailors aboard 121 boats prepared for the start of Quantum Key West 2013.

At the marina basin in front of the Westin and Hyatt hotels, crews were busily loading sails and rigging sheets aboard the two largest entries in the 26th annual midwinter regatta. It will be an America's Cup style match race when Bella Mente and Shockwave cross tacks on the beautiful azure waters off the Florida Keys and Key West.

That is what happened when the two 72-footers met at the Palm Beach Regatta hosted by the Sailfish Yacht Club. Shockwave, a Reichel-Pugh design skippered by George Sakellaris of Framingham, Mass., won that encounter. However, Bella Mente, a Judel Vrolijk design owned by Hap Fauth of Minneapolis, Minn., raced that regatta with old sails that have since been replaced.

"We will approach it just like a match race because that is essentially what it is," Fauth said. Obviously, the starts are going to be very important and then it's about all the little details to generate boat speed."

Both owners have a gentlemen's agreement to not get into high-risk pre-starting maneuvers in hopes of getting off the line safely and letting the race be decided out on the course. "The last thing we want to do is get tangled up during the start and have a crash that causes major damage and ruins the regatta," Fauth said.

Way at the end of the maze of piers in front of the Galleon, Steve Benjamin sat in the salon of his 66-foot motor yacht and went over computer charts for the new High Performance Rule. That handicap rating system will make its Key West debut this year and Benjamin, a North Sails professional, was going over final calculations for Version 4.

Decision, a Carkeek 40 owned by Stephen Murray of New Orleans, is the highest-rated entry. Spookie, Benjamin's entry that is an early version of the Carkeek 40, stands second. Both boats are hoping heavy air predominates during the week.

"We won't have our advantage of being a bigger, more powerful boat unless it's windy. Anything less than 10 knots will not be good for us," said Benjamin, who created and developed HPR along with Annapolis-based professional Dobbs Davis.

On the other side of Historic Seaport on the dock in front of the Half Shell Raw Bar, the close-knit crew on Teamwork was busily preparing their J/122 that has enjoyed much success in Key West. Teamwork won PHRF Boat of the Week in 2003 and captured PHRF 1 class in 2012.

"Our crew truly is family," said Team, who has two sons and a brother aboard along with several longtime friends. "We come here for the great competition, but also for the camaraderie we have with each other. We sail hard and have a lot of fun."

Over at Truman Annex, a bunch of J/70 sport boats were being put into the water via trailer or crane. The latest creation of J/Boats has taken the sailing world by storm and overnight become the largest class at Key West with a whopping 39 boats.

Continued...

World Class Talent Heading to Key West Race Week continued

Annapolis skipper Tate Russack won the only J/70 regatta held so far, the Fall Brawl in Annapolis. He has North Sails pro Allan Terhune aboard as tactician and figures to be in the thick of things again. However, top-notch professionals such as Tim Healy (Newport, R.I.) and Kerry Klingler (Wilton, Conn.) have joined the class as owner-drivers while another sailmaker with a lengthy resume, Dave Ullman (Newport Beach, Cal.) is tactician for Ohio owner Joseph Colling.

There were figures to be some bare knuckle battling in the 52 Class, which features many of the world's top professionals. Quantum, representing the title sponsor, dominated the class last year, placing first or second in all 10 races to win going away. Skipper Doug DeVos does not expect a repeat as the six-boat fleet features Azzurra, champion of the 52 Super Series in 2012.

"Sometimes it all comes together and you get on a roll. I doubt that's going to happen two years in a row," DeVos said. "I would say Azzurra has to be the favorite based on how it performed on the circuit last season. There's certainly not going to take a step backward so we all need to raise our game in order to reach their level."

After seeing declining numbers the previous couple years, the Melges 24 class has seen a resurgence and is second-largest of the regatta with 23 boats. Detroit pro Bora Gulari and his West Marine Rigging/New England Ropes team will try to defend its title against such stiff competition as Rock N Roll (Argyle Campbell), Full Throttle (Brian Porter) and hedgehog (Alec Cutler).

"I think there are seven or eight boats that can win races and win the regatta," Gulari said. "There are some other strong teams behind that group that could contend. This is definitely a turnaround year for the class in Key West, which is good to see. This is one of the best places to race a Melges 24. I've had some great experiences down here."

The Melges 32 class is smaller, but no less competitive with an international fleet of 11 boats representing six different countries. Key West marks the continuation of the 2013 Melges 32 Midwinter Series and will provide five days of exciting action.

Among the elite field of competitors is former America's Cup challenger Vincenzo Onorato, who will be helming Mascalzone Latino with the aid of up-and-coming tactician Gabriele Benussi. Another highly acclaimed Italian team is Robertissima 1 with skipper Roberto Tomasini Grinover and tactician Flavio Favini joining forces. Lorenzo Bressani and Federico Michetti have captured multiple world championships together and are now the afterguard aboard Andrea Pozzi's Bombarda.

Trey Sheehan and Terry McSweeney, amateur sailors from Cleveland, Ohio, are 21-year veterans of the race week held off Key West and look forward to matching wits with mostly professional teams.

"Traditionally, Key West has the highest level of international grand prix competition in the U.S. and allows us amateurs the opportunity to mix it up with the best in the world on- and off- the- water," said "Trey and I always look forward to the warm tropical weather with great sailing conditions. Key West never fails to provide great racing and incredible nightlife throughout the week."

There was a time when Farr 40 attracted as many as 37 boats. Competition among the professional-laden teams was always intense and often the regatta came down to the last leg of the last race. There are fewer Farr 40s these days, but the talent level aboard the boats is still extremely high as all six entries have big-name tacticians aboard.

Owner Jim Richardson has welcomed the return of Terry Hutchinson to the program as Barking Mad seeks to repeat as Key West champion. Hutchinson has spent the past two years as skipper and sailing manager of Artemis Racing, the Swedish challenger for the America's Cup. After being released by Artemis in early December, Hutchinson jumped at rejoining close friend Richardson, with whom he has captured three Farr 40 world championships.

"I really enjoy sailing with Jim and I've always loved coming to Key West so it was kind of a no-brainer," Hutchinson said. "It's good to be back in Key West and I'm looking forward to catching up with old friends and meeting new ones."

Barking Mad rallied to win the 2012 North American circuit, but will certainly be challenged in Key West by reigning world champion Flash Gordon 6, skippered by Helmut Jahn of Chicago with British pro Ian Williams aboard as tactician.

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Follow the racing and shoreside action through the online portal: <http://www.premiere-racing.com/KWRWLive/> USE #QKeyWest in your tags and keeping connected!

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Quantum Key West 2013 is a US SAILING sanctioned event.

Event Sponsors include Title Sponsor **Quantum Sails** (Official Sailmaker) and Day Sponsors **Lewmar/Navtec** (Official Marine Hardware), **Mount Gay® Rum** (Official Rum), and **Nautica Watches** (Official Timekeeper). The Supporting Sponsors are **B&G** (Official Marine Electronics), **Marlow Ropes** (Official Rope), and **Gill** (Official Technical Gear).

Regatta dates are January 20 – 25, 2013.

Key West Race Week is also supported by *The Florida Keys & Key West Tourism Council*. The *Historic Seaport at the Key West Bight* is the Official Marina. The *Ocean Key Resort and Spa* is the Official Hotel. *Sapporo USA* is the Official Beer.

24 Industry Partners bring their support through a program that is now in its 12th year.

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The racing will be conducted under permit in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The sanctuary protects 2,900 square nautical miles of critical marine habitat, including coral reef, hard bottom, seagrass meadow, mangrove communities and sand flats.

Event information, past results and photos: www.Premiere-Racing.com

About Quantum Sail Design Group



Founded by a group of independent, experienced sailmakers who shared a common vision, the Quantum Sail Design Group has been dedicated to overcoming the trend towards mass-marketing and mediocrity in the sailmaking industry. The company is known for its winning sail designs in dozens of classes from dinghies to super yachts and its high-performance FusionM® sails.

Quantum has more than 60 sales and service outlets throughout the world, with European headquarters in Barcelona, Spain, and corporate offices in Traverse City, Michigan.

www.QuantumSails.com

For more information and coverage of Quantum Key West Race Week 2013:
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[Quantum Key West 2012 Results](#)

Photographs are available to qualified media.
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