



QUANTUM KEY WEST RACE WEEK 2015

January 18-23, 2015

January 18, 2015 – For Immediate Release

Ready to Race at Quantum Key West Race Week 2015!

Bill Wagner, Press Officer

Florida Keys, Key West - Key West has been a flurry of activity for the last four days as sailors swarmed into town for the annual race week that is being held here for the 28th year. Quantum Key West 2015, which begins Monday on the aqua waters off the southernmost point of the United States, has attracted 115 boats in 10 classes and competitors have been busily preparing and practicing.

Curious tourists looked on with interest as crew members loaded huge sail bags onto the mini maxis that are berthed at the docks in front of the Hyatt. Bella Mente and Shockwave are powerful 72-foot racing machines that require a crew of 18 professionals to race. They will square off in IRC 1 along with Numbers, a 66-footer that returns to the regatta for the first time in several years.

Minneapolis skipper Hap Fauth and his team on Bella Mente will be seeking to repeat as class champs. Veteran pro Terry Hutchinson, who was just named Rolex Yachtsman of the Year for the second time in his illustrious career, joins the team as tactician and is one of many new crew members on Bella Mente.

Hutchinson has helped owners to victory in the Farr 40 and TP52 class at this regatta, but this will be his first time racing a maxi off Key West. He will rely heavily on the recommendations of navigator Ian Moore as Bella Mente draws 17 ½ feet.

“It’s going to be different because there are certain areas of the race course that we cannot go,” Hutchinson said. “That affects your decision-making as a tactician. Half the challenge is to not run aground.”

Shockwave is hoping to avoid the difficulties that prevented it from finishing one race and competing in two others a year ago. Skipper George Sakalleris shook his head when recounting the mishaps, which began with hooking a lobster pot on the way out to the race course. Paul Cayard, a member of the National Sailing Hall of Fame, is the new tactician aboard Shockwave.

“That’s one of the wonderful things about having this program, it gives you an opportunity to race with some great sailors,” said Sakalleris, a resident of Framingham, Mass. “Paul Cayard is certainly one of the best and we are very happy to have him aboard.”

Numbers was a regular competitor in Key West for many years under owner Dan Meyers, who steered the boat to victory a few times. Work commitments have prevented Meyers from participating the last few years, but he has chartered his boat to Gunther Buerman for Quantum Key West 2015.

Buerman is grateful to have also gotten many members of the old Numbers crew, including renowned tactician Brad Butterworth. The four-time America’s Cup winner knows the boat extremely well and was eager to get her sailing again.

Sakalleris said Shockwave and Bella Mente cannot afford to get into any match racing battles and forget about the smaller boat. “There might be situations when (Numbers) can hurt either one of this. If we pick a fight with each other, she could sail right past us.”

continued

Premiere Racing volunteers working the crane at Truman Annex are busier than usual this year as the four high-tech catamarans in the GC 32 class are dry-sailing, meaning they are hauled out of the water at the end of each day's racing.

These are foiling catamarans capable of doing 30-40 knots in the right conditions. One mistake could lead to a catastrophic capsizing and testament to the danger of racing in the GC 32 class is the fact the sailors wear helmets.

"The level of stability is so much lower from what you have in a keelboat. You have to make fine adjustments in everything you do in order to keep the boat under control," said Jason Carroll, skipper of Argo. "Whenever you're going that fast there is a chance you can hurt yourself if something goes wrong. We're still learning this boat so there is a chance we could stick the nose in the water."

Most of the boats competing in Quantum Key West are berthed at Historic Seaport, either at The Galleon docks or Conch Harbor. Walking the long and winding floating piers at The Galleon is like going to a boat show as the slips are filled with Melges 24s, J/111s, Swan 42s and such sleek designs as a Ker 43, Mills 43 and J/125.

Those latter three are among 11 boats competing in IRC 2 with the Swan 42s and High Performance Rule entries also being scored separately as a sub-class. Spookie, a Carkeek 40 sailed by the husband-wife team of Steve and Heidi Benjamin is defending champs in HPR. They will be challenged this year by two newcomers – Tonnerre 4 and True.

Skipper Peter Vroon recently took possession of the Ker 51 previously known as Varnua, which he said had a solid track record. The Netherlands resident said he wanted a slightly larger platform than Tonnerre de Breskens, which he successfully campaigned the previous six years.

True is a Kernan 47 that is fairly new to skipper Leo van den Thillart of Newport, R.I. This will be the first round-the-buoys regatta for van den Thillart since modifications were made to the boat, which enjoyed some success under the name of Katana.

"This year is a bit different since we have combined with the IRC fleet. We'll have more varied competition between the two boat types, which I think is good," Benjamin said of the HPR entries.

The Melges 24 class has doubled in size since last year and will feature 13 entries, including six from foreign countries. Michigan skipper Thomas Ritter steered Tramp to second place at Quantum Key West 2014 and admitted it will be tough to repeat that performance with several strong programs joining the fleet this year.

"I think the two Norwegian boats will be very serious competitors. Mikey (Kevin Welch) has historically done well while Steven Boho has been very religious about campaigning The 300," Ritter said. "Of course, there's always a surprise. You get here and think you have the fleet figured out, but as the week develops something completely different happens."

J/70 is the largest class in the regatta with 54 boats and features a who's who of top professionals. This is the third year the popular sport boat has competed in Key West and Tim Healy is the two-time defending champ. The North Sails executive is the clear-cut favorite again after capturing both the J/70 World Championship and North American crown.

"We have another real strong fleet down here this year and I think there are a number of boats that are capable of contending," Healy said. "The class is maturing and people are learning how to sail the boats better."

J/111 and J/88 are new one-design classes in Key West and feature seven and six boats, respectively. Cleveland skipper Rob Ruhlman steered Spaceman Spiff to victory in PHRF 1 class last year and is looking forward to racing exclusively against sister ships.

"Most people would rather race one-design as opposed to PHRF or any other rating system. Coming from a Lightning background, that is certainly my preference," said Ruhlman, who hasn't done enough J/111 racing to handicap the fleet here. "There just hasn't been enough one-design competition in this class to be able to say there is a clear favorite."

continued

PHRF 1 features a pair of hot new designs in the Farr 280 and C&C 30. Those two speedsters will be challenged by more established designs such as a J/122 and Farr 30. Robin Team sailed his J/122 to victory in this class two years ago while finishing second in 2014.

PHRF 2 features another past winner in Tangent, a Cape Fear 38 owned by Gerry Taylor of Annapolis. Taylor missed Key West last year for the first time since 2004 and is thrilled to be back racing off the Conch Republic.

"I've always loved sailing in Key West," Taylor said. "The competition is top-notch, the regatta management is first-class and you can't go wrong with high wind and warm weather."

It doesn't hurt to almost always be in contention as well. Taylor captured class honors in 2011 and 2013 while finishing second several times. That history makes Tangent one of the pre-regatta favorites in PHRF 2 class, which includes such divergent designs as a C&C 121, J/105 and J/80.

"There are some different boats in the class than we have seen in the past so it will be interesting to see how we match up," Taylor said.

Event Blog: <http://premiere-racing.com/2015blog/>

Event Website: <http://www.premiere-racing.com>

Event Sponsors include Title Sponsor **Quantum Sails** and Day Sponsors **Lewmar** (Official Marine Hardware), and **Mount Gay® Rum** (Official Rum). The Supporting Sponsors are **B&G** (Official Marine Electronics), **Marlow Ropes** (Official Rope), and **Gaastra** (Official Clothing and Footwear).

Key West Race Week is also supported by The **Florida Keys & Key West Tourism Council**. **Sapporo USA** is the Official Beer and **Regatta Ginger Beer** is the Official Ginger Beer.

Chelsea Clock is providing their classic Shipstrike Clocks for the Boat of the Day trophies.

20 Industry Partners bring their support through a program that is now in its 14th year.

Quantum Key West Race Week 2015 is a **US SAILING** sanctioned event.

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 news: www.Premiere-Racing.com



About Quantum Sail Design Group

Founded in 1996 by a group of independent, experienced sailmakers who shared a common vision, Quantum Sail Design Group is dedicated to providing a superior customer experience with the best service, products, and quality. The company is known for its high-performance Fusion M™ sails for all types of sailors and boats, from dinghies to super yachts.

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

www.QuantumSails.com

For more information on Quantum Key West Race Week 2015

Premiere Racing, Inc. 67B Front Street, Marblehead, MA, 01945
Tel: (781) 639-9545 Fax: (781) 639-9171

Email: Jeanne@Premiere-Racing.com
[Key West Race Week Photo Gallery](#)

Web Site: www.Premiere-Racing.com
[Quantum Key West 2014 Results](#)



**Official
Sponsors**



The Florida Keys
Key West
Close To Perfect - Far From Normal
Florida Keys Tourism

