

Final countdown to the UON SB20 World Championships at Hamilton Island



by Katie Ashworth, SB20 Class Association 12 Dec 2012 07:45 GMT
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SB20s off Hamilton Island Yacht Club © Hamilton Island Photography

The UON SB20 World Championships will get underway at Hamilton Island this Friday when 42 crews representing nine countries meet for the opening bout in the Whitsunday Islands, at the edge of Queensland's Great Barrier Reef.

Up to three races have been scheduled daily through to the deciding day, Thursday December 20. Monday 17th is a planned layday, designed to give competitors, particularly the Europeans who have come from their winter, a well-earned break from the comparative sauna-like conditions and the relentless trophy hunt.



SB20s off Hamilton Island Yacht Club © Hamilton Island Photography

Over six days the normally tranquil waters off award-

including current SB20 European champions, Russian Oleg Zherebtsov and his helm Rodion Luka (Raketa), and former class world champions Geoff Carveth (WKD) and Jerry Hill (sportsboatworld.com), both UK based.

Australia's hopes are riding on a number of proven and hungry countrymen, including Victoria's Chris Dare (Flirtatious), Tasmania's Nick Rogers (Karabos) and Hamilton Island's CEO Glenn Bourke (Club Marine), who fared well in last weekend's non-pointscore pre-worlds,.

"We sailed really well on Saturday to win three of the four races then on Sunday Rodion pulled out his big guns and started playing hardball, he was very impressive," said Bourke, who has teamed up with Andrew York on the main and Mooloolaba's Greg Macallansmith on the bow.

SB20 Worlds 2012



Bourke believes that since last year's UK worlds the calibre of the SB20 fleet has lifted. "The top four or five are sailing incredibly in really well-prepared boats. It's going to be pretty tough".

Over 35 years of sailing, Nick Rogers has won seven international regattas and 24 Australian championships.

"My preparation for the worlds goes beyond racing... we've been out training and tuning the boat another three days a week for months now," said the Taswegian, whose crew for the worlds are young Hobart sailors Michael Viney and George Jones.

Chris Dare from Melbourne was the most dangerous in Hobart at a recent class meet and one of the organisers, Rod Jones, predicts he'll be a top ten finisher.

Bourke meanwhile has his money on a strong finale from Ian Brown (AUS) who has teamed up with London 470 gold medallist Malcolm Page, bowman Klade Hauschildt and Sabot and Flying 11 sensation, 14 year-old Finn Gilbert from Sydney, on One Design Sailing.

One of the more colourful Queensland entries is Mike McLean (Mountain Goat Racing), an Australian Rugby League legend from the mid-1980s and early 90s who played for the Sydney Roosters and

Queensland State of Origin. These days he owns Bowen's Grandview Hotel, as featured in Baz Luhrmann's epic film, Australia.

Of the 42 SB20 crews, three will be skippered by women including Russian Olympic 470 and Yngling sailor, Anna Basalkina, Great Britain's Sarah Allen (Sailboat Deliveries), part of the winning crew at the 2008 world title, and Australia's Paris Stowell and her crew of West Australian Aboriginal high school girls on Squalo Bianco.

Countries represented include: Australia, Great Britain, United Arab Emirates, Italy, France, Russia, Ukraine, Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland.

All crews are now installed at Hamilton Island and many have been out training and cramming to learn the area's nuances. "It's a stunning location, more of a tropical paradise than we had ever imagined and in direct contrast to the UK where it's three or four degrees, grey and rainy," said SB20 class secretary Katie Ashworth this morning.

"For the majority of the gang from Europe, this is their main holiday of the year and what a fabulous destination it is, especially for those with families; there is something for everyone," she added.

The Whitsundays have been blessed with magic sailing conditions for weeks on end, providing the perfect introduction to the area for first-time visitors. The solid breezes are expected to hold for the next couple of days then may peter out, putting the acid test on the world's best sports boat sailors as the mercury rises.

Registration commences today and racing is due to start this Friday, December 14, at midday under instruction from the island's trusted Principal Race Officer, Denis Thompson, and his world class race management team.

Results will be available daily at worlds2012.lasersb3.com and www.hamiltonisland.com.au/sb20-worlds-2012

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