



Short Handed Sailing Association of New Zealand

Press Release 5: RNI Leg 1

Release Date: 24 February 2020

Race Start Leg 1: 22.02.2020, Leg 2 Start: 24.02.2020

The first leg of the Evolution Sails Round North Island Race starts in Auckland on Saturday (22.2) with a 154NM dash to Mangonui at the top of the North Island. In the lead up to the race, the heavens opened, and a solid downpour soaked the fleet in the hour before the start. By 2 pm the rain had stopped, and our fleet were off, an impressive sight to see as 38 yachts powered across the start line and headed north.

Wired, Kia Kaha and Miss Scarlett quickly demonstrated the benefits of waterline length as they quickly pulled ahead of the fleet for a close dual up the country, while further back in the fleet a close battle was playing out between Anarchy, Blink and Mr Kite for podium positions on handicap in division one.

In Division Three's battle of the Elliot 1050 an interesting first leg has played out. Kick, skippered by Brendan Sands and Richard Sands, had an exceptional start and pulled well ahead of the pack early in the race. For Gale Force, Skipper Ken Ormandy described the start as "the worst start in our two-handed sailing career" as they were rolled by the bigger boats at the start, leaving them wallowing in bad air as the rest of the fleet sailed away from them. This has left Ormandy and Co-Skipper Sam Tucker to push Gale Force hard to get back to the front of the pack. Our all-woman crew of Victoria Murdoch and Emily Riley, onboard High Voltage, struck problems just south of Cape Brett suffering rudder damage and the suspension of their race. The race is not over for these determined skippers with the boat being lifted at Opuia, inspected, repair work undertaken and is now back in the water, with shore crew delivering her to Mangonui in time for the leg two start.

Rodney Keenan, owner of Evolution Sails and skipper of Laissez Faire, describe their first leg – "Leg one – it was actually a fast leg for an old girl, with several sail changes to many, it took a while to work out a fast mode for us, and it meant a bit of work for Mike! We probably did more sail changes than most that's for sure! For the next leg we are just going to go with it and see what happens".

Mike Beasley co-skipper of Laissez fair echoed Keenan's thoughts – "The leg was trying at times, we learnt a lot about the boat and its strengths and weaknesses. We are looking forward to Leg 2 being on the wind with a Northerly at the Start, going west, south-west and then back to the North as we head into Wellington". While the forecast suggests that Beasley might not get the breeze that he wants, there's definitely one thing for sure – Keenan and Rodney are getting to know the boat fast and will continue to improve her performance as the race progresses.

With all the fleet now finished here in Manganoui our thoughts turn to leg 2 – the 550nm from Manganoui to Wellington, and the longest leg of the race. With the official start time now set for 12:00 noon today – 24th February and a southerly breeze expected, the fleet should have a good send on the first stretch toward the top of the North Island before turning the corner and being on the breeze for the start of the long stretch down the west coast of the North Island.



Race Tracking:

You can track the fleets progress on the Burnsco Race Tracker – visit our website ssanz.co.nz to access the tracker.

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RNI Background

The SSANZ Two Handed Round North Island Race (RNI), proudly sponsored by Evolution Sails, is New Zealand's most iconic yachting challenge and the 2020 edition will feature 38 yachts from 28 to 52 feet. This is 13th edition of the race, 43 years after the inaugural event was first planned by Sir Peter Blake and Martin Foster!

The race starts in Auckland with the first leg to Mangonui in the far north (154NM), Leg 2 is from Mangonui to Wellington (550NM), Leg 3 from Wellington to Napier(200NM), and the final leg from Napier returning to Auckland (367NM). The race is expected to take approximately 2 weeks in total to complete.

Thirty-three feet separate the smallest to largest boat, so the diversity of this fleet will bring with it not only great line honours racing for the larger yachts but an epic handicap battle across the fleet. With 26 of the total 38 yachts between 34 and 40 feet we can expect some very tight racing in the middle of the fleet and each leg will go down to the wire on handicap.

Making it to the start line of this epic race is a challenge in itself. Each yacht must have a Category 2 Safety Certificate issued by Yachting New Zealand, have completed a 250 Nautical Mile qualifying passage with both Co-Skippers on board. The Co-Skippers must both also complete Advanced First Aid training, Advanced Sea Survival qualifications, and provide a medical certificate deeming them fit to compete. Each yacht must meet an extensive list of safety requirements and have completed safety drills, all of which are in addition to preparing the boat to ensure it is ready for this epic race and getting as many miles under the keel as possible two handed before the race. Many of the fleet used the SSANZ Anzac Enduro Race as their qualifying race and have also used the SSANZ Lewmar Triple Series, PIC Coastal Classic, RAYC White Island Race and other races to build up two handed time on their path to the start.

Ends

