

On The Water

Thomson is gearing up for big test in Shanghai

ALEX THOMSON is ready for the first-ever Shanghai International Regatta.

The event will be held between July 10 and July 12.

It will be the first time in 140 years that racing has been held on the Huangpu River.

Gosport sailor Thomson will form part of Team Great Britain.

They will take on teams from around the world in a much-anticipated match-racing competition.

Alongside Thomson, Stokes Bay's International Moth sailor Chris Rashley will also be competing at the event.

Five-time European champion Rashley has expressed his delight at being involved in this pioneering project, as he aims to claim victory.

He said: 'I am very much looking forward to competing in the Shanghai International Regatta.'

'I have been privileged to sail in some amazing places in my career, so to be one of the first professional sailors to compete on the Huangpu River is a fantastic.'

With leading Chinese Asset Management firm ZhongJin named as sponsors, hopes are high the regatta can become a leading sailing event across the globe.

For Five West chief executive officer Stewart Hosford, this is the culmination of almost three years of negotiations.

Hosford said: 'This is groundbreaking stuff for us and China, and it's exciting bringing sailing to the heart of a city like Shanghai.'

'We've been working on this for many years, back and forth, and are super excited about launching this series.'

'We hope to stage the international regatta on an annual basis, and for it to become a globally recognised event on the annual sailing calendar.'

Alex Thomson Racing have also been awarded the BT Sports Industry Award for best use of PR for the #MastWalk campaign that saw the skipper take a dramatic dive from the tip of the Hugo Boss mast.

The stunt has been an internet sensation, gaining more than a million views within a matter of days.

Philip Burghaus, marketing manager from Hugo Boss, praised the achievement.

Burghaus said: 'We did not expect to win this award but as a major sponsor of sailing, we believe sailing as a sport provides outstanding sponsorship value as demonstrated tonight.'

Walker standing tall in round-the-world battle

Warsash sailor targets victory in a gruelling contest after securing second in latest tussle

by JAMES AYLES

The News
sport@thenews.co.uk



IAN WALKER has his eyes on the prize as Team Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing close in on victory in the Volvo Ocean Race.

The Warsash skipper and his seven-strong crew lie in first place overall with three legs remaining of the epic, round-the-world race.

Having started in Alicante in October 2014, the race covers 11 ports and 38,679 miles across the globe.

So far the seven-strong race fleet has visited Cape Town, Abu Dhabi, Sanya, Auckland and Itajai.

The boats are currently in Newport, Rhode Island, before racing to Lisbon, Lorient, The Hague and finishing in Gothenburg on June 27.

It was a nail-biting finale as to the most recent leg as Abu Dhabi Offshore Racing were beaten to the line by closest rival Dongfeng Racing, with just three minutes and 25 seconds separating the boats after 5,010 miles of racing.

Walker's team are six points clear at the top of the rankings, having won the first and fifth legs in this seven-boat contest.

But the skipper is keen to maintain concentration ahead of the most gruelling, and dangerous, leg so far.

He said: 'It's important we keep our focus and get across the finish line, we're not there yet - there's still six weeks to go.'

There are no guarantees in ocean racing - nothing is enough at this stage, that's for sure.'

The two-time Olympic silver medalist, who is competing in his third



EYES ON THE PRIZE Ian Walker hopes to seal Volvo Ocean Race glory after showing top form so far Picture: Ainhoa Sanchez/Volvo Ocean Race

Volvo Ocean Race, believes there is far more to the race than just winning.

'We've made some cracking memories in this race,' said Walker.

'Winning the first leg into Cape Town was extraordinary, especially by a narrow margin.'

'I would be lying if I said Cape Horn wasn't one of the highlights of my life, let alone this race.'

'Cape Horn is something you fear, then there's a tremendous feeling of relief and satisfaction when you round it.'

'That will stay with me for the rest of my life.'

For the 45-year-old, competing in

the Volvo Ocean Race is the fulfilment of a lifelong dream.

Walker added: 'I grew up following the old Whitbread Round The World Race, watching the boats sailing into Southampton Water.'

'I remember as a young boy, seeing the famous boats sail out around the world and back again and it made a tremendous impression on me.'

'It's fun to share this with all the people back home.'

'We all want to be first to win, but even if you finish third, fourth or fifth, there's still a tremendous feeling of satisfaction.'

'Every time we reach a port, having

sailed a three, four, five, six thousand mile leg, however we finish, we never forget to stop to shake everyone hands and congratulate ourselves because it is a great achievement.'

'These are powerful boats, run by only eight guys. We have to deal with everything that's thrown at us, relatively poor living conditions, not great food and not a lot of sleep.'

'It is a tremendous achievement.'

Elsewhere in the fleet, Portsmouth's Sam Davies and Gosport's Dee Caffari are competing for Team SCA as part of the first all-female crew to enter the race in more than a decade, and are currently in sixth place.

Regatta heading for huge turnout as excitement grows



FUN Cowes Week Picture: Christopher Ison

ONLINE ENTRIES are open for Cowes Week 2015, which will take place in August.

Cowes Week was first held in 1826, and as the largest sailing regatta in the world, attracts between 800 and 1,000 yachts in up to 40 classes across the seven-day event.

Around 7,000 competitors will race from August 8 to August 15.

The range is from weekend sailors to World Champions and Olympic medallists, and this year the event is expected to be one of the biggest yet.

A wide range of cruiser classes will compete at Cowes

Week, and these fleets have proven to be an increasingly popular introduction into racing at the regatta, serving as an alternative to the optimised race boats of the core IRC classes.

This year the sailing instructions for the event have been significantly simplified in a bid to improve the racing experience, and will be published a few weeks before the regatta starts, while the Island Sailing Club's ISCRS rating system will be used to determine rankings.

All boats entering Cowes Week must ensure they fully

comply with Category 4 of the ISAF Offshore Special Regulations, with organisers keen to stress that it is down to the skipper to ensure that nothing has been missed from the list.

Kate Johnson, the Commercial and Marketing Director, has expressed her delight at the events organised for Cowes Week, which currently include a Ladies' Day and a Family Day.

Johnson said: 'We are looking forward to an exciting Aberdeen Asset Management Cowes Week 2015.'

'There will be a real

buzz around the week with some big boats taking part this year including Maxi 72s, IMOCA 60s and Volvo Round the World boats and overall entries look to be significantly up on last year.'

'Developments for this year include fun fundraising activities for UKSA on Family Day and a full programme for Ladies' Day, including prizes for best-dressed female sailors.'

'Cowes Week will definitely the place to be to witness some action-packed racing.'