

## Runners & Riders 2017 Volvo Noble Marine RS300 National Championship

The RS300 fleet loves an election before heading up to Scotland for its Nationals. Last time we were up there was 2014 (Indyref anyone?) while this year we're in the aftermath of the General Election. So who are the likely vote winners at this year's Nationals hosted by Prestwick SC? (See what I did there?).

The club trophy will be going to Prestwick without a doubt unless either Hykeham, Emsworth or some late runner can muster another entry. Youth trophy? Well done, Ben Green, I think you're the youngest in the fleet this year even if you are in your mid 20s. I'm not sure if there's a furthest travelled award, but if there is it will go to Alastair 'Woody' Wood – that's a long old poke from Kent to the Scottish West coast, but unlikely to make the first race if he isn't on the road already.

No first-timers have entered this year to my knowledge so if we have a keeper trophy then it will be a straight fight between those on their second attempt – Rich Hargreaves, Paul Watson, Paul Rigg, and Eamonn Rankin. I think I've got that right. My money's on either of the Pauls but Rich showed bursts of speed last year and I have it on good authority that Eamonn's been putting in some tidy races at the host club. Should be a good one this.

On an individual basis, is anyone going to do a Macron and sweep all before them or will there be someone who may just limp over the line? Here's the odds. I've done no more than simply pick out of a hat. If you're not included it's because you haven't done anything dumb enough to get noticed. Don't worry. This is a good thing. Or you might not have entered yet.

Evens, and bookie's favourite – **Dave Acres**. After winning the Nationals in 2015 he sold his boat and bought a brand new one. What do we make of this – foolhardy, confident or some elaborate tax dodge? Unfortunately unable to make his tax planning work in his favour last year, he will be there or thereabouts at the end of the regatta this time.

2/1 – **Steve Bolland**. Has taken an interesting interpretation of Elvstrom's quote that "You haven't won the race, if in winning you have lost the respect of your competitors" to mean that winning doesn't count unless you outdrink the rest of the fleet. Got lucky last time at Prestwick when he returned to the club after a 12 hour bender to find racing abandoned. This is the reason he's not joint favourite with Acres. Plus he hasn't been in his boat since April.

3/1 – **Ian Baillie**. Past National Champion who has returned to the fleet after a sojourn in a Musto Skiff. A bit of an unknown quantity this time as, despite his pedigree, he's been training quietly on the Scottish East coast. New boat, new attitude? One to watch.

3/1 – **Steve Sallis**. 2<sup>nd</sup> at last year's champs and current Inland Champion. May need less of a breeze than last year so may be disappointed as this is Scotland where it's never known to blow less than 20 knots. In 2014 we had over 30 knots on two days.

5/1 – **Alistair 'Storky' McLaughlin**. Only 5/1 if the wind doesn't get above force 3. Won one race at the champs last year by an embarrassingly large margin in a force 2. But then 'Two Pint' Pete Ellis also won a race.

6/1 – **Matt 'DC' Sargent**. 3<sup>rd</sup> last time we were up Prestwick in 2014. Still denies sleeping in the clubhouse shower one night. Also some dodgy goings on with a pig's head. Will go well if it blows and no-one turns the shower on.

6/1 – **Neil ‘Mr Bevs’ Beveridge**. Only 6/1 if the wind is +15 knots. Received absolute dog’s abuse last time when his much vaunted team training regime failed to meet objectives – the only time the wooden spoon has been won by an entire club. Sailing on home water again so expected to bounce back.

8/1 – **Tim ‘Timbo’ Keen**. I wasn’t sure where to put Tim in the betting odds. Has won the Grand Prix circuit for about the last 10 years in a row but hasn’t sailed this year due to recent fatherhood. Family is accompanying him to Prestwick so likely to get even less sleep than usual. Best result was 4<sup>th</sup> in 2014.

10/1 – **Richard le Mare**. Class chairman and likely to go well if it blows. Will be hoping for repeats of race 4 in 2014 when the last three in the bar the previous night picked up all the podium spots the next day. Unfortunately that doesn’t happen very often but stranger things have happened (see Pete Ellis comment above).

Racing commences at 2pm on Thursday 24 August, through to Sunday 27 August. Many thanks to all of our sponsors – Volvo, Noble Marine, SpeedSix, Boatyard at Beer and Forward WIP.

Entry is still open to the RS300 Nationals. Find all the event information on the website here: <http://www.rs300.org/championships/cindex.asp?clselect=Home&eid=1451>

By Steve Bolland

Photos of Prestwick 2014 Nationals by Vicky Bayliss. Pig’s head photo by Steve Bolland.

