

2010 Rayglass NZ Offshore Powerboat Championship
Event preview: Round 1, Taupo, Sunday 31 January 2010
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Rayglass-backed NZ Offshore Powerboat series fires up in Taupo

On Sunday 31 January, the spectacular sights and sounds of a big field of offshore powerboats at full speed will delight the thousands of people visiting Lake Taupo during Auckland anniversary weekend.

The offshore powerboat race is a traditional highlight of the Taupo summer holiday season, according to Cary Gleeson, president of the NZ Offshore Powerboat Association (NZOPA).

“This season we’re expecting some seriously good racing action with a strong field confirmed for most classes of our popular Rayglass Boats-sponsored series,” says Gleeson, who anticipates several more entries for the eight-round championship to be confirmed before Taupo’s opening round.

The 2010 season calendar comprises events in Taupo (31 January), Gisborne (6 February), Gulf Harbour (20 February), Napier (6 March), Wellington (27 March), Whitianga (10 April), Marsden Cove outside Whangarei (24 April) with the final round in Auckland (8 May).

“My gut feeling is that it’s going to be a cracker of a season,” says Gleeson. “We started off on the right foot with Rayglass Boats confirming – and extending – their support of the series. We certainly appreciate their involvement and it’s particularly pleasing in these economic conditions to be able to work with a great sponsor like Rayglass, offering value to their brand through its association with our long-running championship.”

The Superboat and Superboat Lite classes, with a top speed of 110 to 120 mph, contest a 100-mile course, while the Super 60, Sport 60, Sport 60 Restricted, Classic and Formula Honda class runs a 60-mile course. The Sport and Classic classes have a top speed of 80 to 100 mph, while the Formula Hondas can run at up to 60 mph, depending on conditions.

For the first time in a couple of years, four of the impressive Superboats are already confirmed for the series.

“While reigning Superboat champions Tony Coleman and Chris Hanley of ‘Cure Kids’ have not entered...yet, the battle between ‘Fairview Windows and Doors’, ‘A1 Homes’, an Australian Superboat ‘Team3’ and what was ‘Sleeyhead’ now renamed ‘Doosan’ is expected to be fast and furious,” says NZOPA’s expert race commentator Jamie McCarthy.

‘Fairview Windows and Doors’ will again be campaigned by Aucklander Warren Lewis on the throttles with a new driver, Steve Whitford, alongside. Twin 525 HP MerCruiser V8 engines power the US-built, 35-foot Doug Skater-design catamaran, making it is a top example of a closed-cockpit powerboat. During the off-season, ‘Fairview’ set a new record for the Auckland Harbour Bridge to Great Barrier Island run (one hour and six minutes for the 180km trip) and a new flying kilo time trial record with a top speed of 219 kph (136.85 mph).

Fellow Aucklanders Scott Lewis, Warren’s brother, and Murray Tuffin again contest the 32-foot ‘A1 Homes’ while long-time Superboat competitor Craig Archer, from Whangaparaoa, and Australian driver Steve Nugent have special dispensation to race the Australian-spec 32-foot Victory catamaran ‘Team 3’ – it’s slightly wider than NZOPA rules allow. The pair was seventh in the 2009 Australian Offshore Championship.

Gleeson and driver Sam Fillmore have contested the Superboat Lite class in recent years in a 28-foot Skater, but the decision to run the championship-winning ‘Sleeyhead’ and move up to the main Superboat class with the 34-foot Phantom is an exciting challenge for the pair.

The Superboat Lite class sees entries from reigning class champions Kelly and Grant Smith, the daughter and father team from Wellington, in ‘Rayglass’ and the ‘Barracuda Kayaks’ team of Gordon Robinson and Andrew MacBeth. Bob Smith and ‘Flea’ Koolen, from Akld in ‘NZ Blokes’, formerly ‘Family Boats’, also return to this closed-cockpit class in their re-engined 28-foot Skater. Napier’s Tony Carson and Craig Parsons have bought and rebuilt ‘Placemakers’. With new outboards, rather than inboard engines, and renamed ‘Red Steel’, this will be the fourth entry in the Superboat Lite class.

The Super 60 boats are the largest of the open cockpit racing craft and reigning class champions Greg Brinck and Eldon Archer, from Auckland, return in a refreshed 'Konica Minolta'. Improvements to the trim tabs and a new 2010 model Evinrude 250HO-E-Tec outboard should set 'Konica' up for a good season.

The 'Espresso Engineers' team of Mike Gerbic and Dave Vazey are back with a more powerful Mercury-engine on their 23-foot Ocke Mannerfelt boat.

The Sports 60 class sees 'Stealth' with her Wellington driver Tim Fellows returning to contest class honours against 'V Max Yamaha', formerly 'Bryant Marine', being run by Aucklanders Graham Pike and Bevan Antonelli. At this stage, 'MarineWorkz', driven by Jono Hanley and Steve Huntingford, is the only Sports 60 Restricted class entrant.

This season the AB Marine Formula Honda Offshore category class includes the reigning class champions Aucklanders Mike Knight and Shannon Thickenpenny now running different boats. Knight teams up with Yale Pook in 'Honda Marine', while Thickenpenny will co-drive for James Taylor in 'Total Oil', formerly 'Electropar'. This popular class also includes Mike Urquhart, from Whangaparaoa, in 'Auckland District Collections 2', Wellingtonian Mike Smith, Kelly's brother, in 'Rayglass', Aucklanders Colin and Zane Dunn in 'CRD Automotive', along with Glen and Chris Powell in 'Back to Bay6'. Brent Oldfield, from Auckland, enters with 'Mothers Marine', the original 'Konica Minolta'. 'California Boats', formerly 'Building Solutions' has been entered by Glen Reid.

"The New Zealand offshore powerboats put on an extremely successful series," adds McCarthy. "Spectator numbers at each event number in the thousands and we're looking forward to this season being another step up from last year.

"I believe this is one of the best supported domestic powerboat racing championships in the world, and we are very fortunate to have one of the very best marine safety crews I've ever seen in action. The guys from Marine Paramedical Services have absolutely brilliant safety procedures; they bring a huge amount to the whole series."

The Taupo event kicks off with a 'meet the drivers and crew' gathering at Pub 'n' Grub on Roberts Street from 7pm on Saturday 30 January.

With boats and crews based on the reserve in front of Taupo's Suncourt Motel, [Sunday's](#) action starts with the 'Formula Offshore' celebrity sprint race at 11:30am before the 1pm start of 'Thunder on the Great Lake'. Children's entertainment will be provided from 10:30am.

"There's excellent viewing from the Lake Terrace foreshore," says Gleeson. "It's slightly elevated and has excellent views of the whole L-shaped course which runs along the main lakefront, out to Four Mile Bay and back again. The team tents, caravan, commentator and food caravans will all be here, and depending on conditions, the race is normally completed within one hour."

Prize-giving takes place at 7pm at The Clubhouse on Roberts Street with all welcome.

NZOPA also thanks Destination Lake Taupo, AB Marine Services, LiquorKing, LavaRock Café, MarineWorkz, Pub 'n' Grub, The Lion Foundation, Marine Paramedical Services, YouthTown and the Tuwharetoa Maori Trust Board for supporting this event.

Further event details and results are posted on the NZOPA website, www.nzoffshore.co.nz.

2010 Rayglass NZ Offshore Powerboat Championships
Entry list as at 20 January 2010

BY CLASS

Current entrants for the 100-mile and 60-mile championships; there may be additional entries for any of the rounds on the day.

Boat	Boat No	Name	Hometown
SUPERBOAT			
Fairview Windows	91	Warren Lewis Steve Whitford	Auckland (Pakuranga) Auckland (Albany)
Doosan (formerly Sleepyhead)	320	Sam Fillmore Cary Gleeson	Auckland (St Heliers) Auckland (Glendowie)
Team 3	20	Craig Archer Steve Nugent	Whangaparaoa Gold Coast
A1 Homes	81	Scott Lewis Murray Tuffin	Auckland (Greenhithe) Auckland (Laingholm)
SUPERBOAT LITE			
NZ Blokes	333	Bob Smith Flea Koolen	Auckland (St Heliers) Auckland (Parnell)
Red Steel (formerly Placemakers)	32	Tony Carson Craig Parsons	Napier Napier
Rayglass	S-5	Kelly Smith Grant Smith	Wellington (Mt Victoria) Wellington (Tawa)
Barracuda Kayaks	S11	Gordon Robinson Andrew MacBeth	Auckland (Wainui) Auckland (Henderson)
SUPER 60			
Espresso Engineers	6	Mike Gerbic Dave Vazey	Auckland Auckland
Konica Minolta	84	Greg Brinck Eldon Archer	Auckland (Sandringham) Auckland (Takapuna)
SPORTS 60			
Stealth	88	Tim Fellows Mark Coburn	Otaki TBA
V Max Yamaha (formerly Bryant Marine)	71	Graham Pike Brett Archer	Auckland Auckland
SPORTS 60 RESTRICTED			
MarineWorks	69	Jono Hanley Steve Huntingford	Auckland Auckland
CLASSIC			
No confirmed entries yet			
AB MARINE FORMULA HONDA OFFSHORE			
Auckland District Collections 2	9	Mike Urquhart TBA	Whangaparaoa
Honda Marine	18	Mike Knight Yael Pook	Auckland Auckland
Total Oil (formerly Electropar)	19	James Taylor Shannon Thickpenny	Auckland Auckland (Kingsland)
CRD Automotive	5	Colin Dunn Zane Dunn	Auckland (Laingholm) Auckland (Laingholm)
Rayglass	10	Mike Smith Matt Hopkins	Wellington (Tawa) TBA
Back to Bay6	8	Glen Powell Chris Powell	Hamilton Hamilton
California Boats (formerly Buildings Solutions)	3	Glen Reid Andrew Jarvis	Auckland (Takapuna) Auckland (Albany)
Mothers Marine (formerly Konica Minolta)	14	Brent Oldfield Reece Hamilton	Auckland Auckland