

RYA Press Release

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RYA and UK Etechells Class Association continue partnership for young keelboat talents

Young aspiring keelboat racers are to be given a chance to apply for season-long access to a number of fully race-prepared 30ft Etechells keelboats, thanks to the continuation of a partnership between RYA Racing and the UK Etechells Class Association into the 2013 racing season.

This opportunity is designed to give talented young sailors the experience of top level one design keelboat racing, giving them the resources and training to push their sailing to the highest level. The objective is to bring two young teams up to the highest level possible, with the aim of helping them to maximise their chances of winning the 2013 British Etechells Nationals in September.

Thanks to the generosity and support of volunteers within the UK Etechells Class Association, up to two selected teams can benefit from the use of their own boat for the season and participate in a full programme of well-organised and competitive racing, with entry fees, boat-yard costs and a small maintenance budget all covered by the class. Some assistance towards accommodation may also be provided. Much of this support is made possible by the kind generosity of Ted Fort OBE.

To support the sailors' progression and development, Race Training and Coaching will be provided the UK Class Association volunteers and top Solent supremos David Bedford and Graham Sunderland, who will support the selected teams and offer both formal and informal coaching on board the boats and from RIBs.

The opportunity is available for 18-24 year olds, and is particularly aimed at graduating RYA Youth Programme sailors and British Keelboat Academy Members although applications from other sailors are welcomed. All racing will be in the Solent from Cowes and subsidised accommodation may be provided either at the UKSA or at owners' homes on the Isle of Wight.

The Etchells is a strict 30ft one design keelboat which, outside of the Olympics, has some of the most competitive racing in the world and winning the Etchells World Championships is regarded as one of the hardest titles to win in sailing. Past World Champions include Americas Cup winners Dennis Conner and John Bertrand, Stuart Childerley (British Olympian, has won the title twice) and Britain's triple Olympic medallist Ben Ainslie has competed at the event as a crew. The UK fleet is very active, highly competitive and welcoming, the class is keen to help develop young sailors and give them the opportunity to learn about keelboats in an exciting and dynamic class.

John Derbyshire OBE, RYA Racing Manager and Performance Director, commented: "We are delighted to once again work with the volunteers and owners within the Etchells Class Association to offer this fantastic opportunity, aimed principally at graduates of our RYA Youth and Junior Racing and British Keelboat Academy programmes.

"Last year's programme saw a competitive trial and some great opportunities for young sailors to try their hand at keelboat sailing in a really competitive class. It is great that the Etchells class share the RYA's enthusiasm to find rewarding and affordable ways to keep young sailors racing at key life transitions so they can go on to enjoy a lifetime within the sport."

Last year's crews enjoyed a great season of racing within the fleet, a number of the sailors attended the Italian Nationals and the Europeans, both hosted at Rosignano, and the crew of Bleddyn Mon achieved a very respectable second place at the 2012 National Championships in September.

Bleddyn Mon commented: "The Etchells class provides some of the most competitive one design racing in the world, so the opportunity to have a boat for a season was one that I could not miss.

"As a team we had a great welcome from the Cowes fleet and everyone was happy to share settings and class-specific tips with us to get us up to speed quickly. The competitive spirit in the fleet definitely comes out on the water and reached a climax last year at the Nationals."

Applications are invited from individuals but pre-formed teams of 3 or 4 sailors are encouraged (the class maximum weight limit is 285kg so competitive teams will need to be as close as possible to that).

For 2013 up to two teams will be offered the use of fully-funded race prepared boats in the Solent for the 2013 season leading up to the British Nationals in September. Full details for the Cowes Etchells Fleet can be found on the UK Etchells Fleet website: www.etchellsukfleet.co.uk, and also see Facebook, [cowesetchellsfleet](https://www.facebook.com/cowesetchellsfleet).

To apply please send a sailing CV and a brief covering email outlining why you should be given the opportunity addressed to Duncan Truswell, RYA Youth Racing Manager, sent care of Fran Wilson, Senior Administrator, Youth Racing, via frances.wilson@rya.org.uk

Interested sailors are invited to discuss the programme with RYA Youth Racing staff at the RYA Dinghy Show at Alexandra Palace on 2-3 March should they require any further information.

The closing date for applications is 1700 on Monday 4 March and it is the intention to notify successful applicants by Friday 8 March whether they have been chosen to attend a selection and training weekend in Cowes on 16/17 March 2013. Final allocation of places for this scheme will be made following this event by the selection panel.

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