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### Course trials at the EUROSAF High Performance Grand Prix

Momentum is growing for the EUROSAF High Performance Grand Prix. Due to take place over 12-16 October on the Mar Menor, the 170sqkm salt water lagoon in the Murcia region of southern Spain, this event aims to gather fast, non-Olympic classes including the A-Class and F18 catamarans, Devoti One, International Moth, 29erXX and the most recent invitees, the Musto Skiff.

As part of the event the D-Ones are holding their first European Championship. As a first in the sailing world, the 'boats' will be joined by kiteboards, the International Kiteboarding Association holding its first ever ISAF-sanctioned Slalom World Champion at the Grand Prix, as part of their Kite Cross discipline.

With ISAF's announcement of the equipment for the sailing event at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, so there is at present great interest in the 29erXX as this Julian Bethwaite design is thought to be one of the favourites for selection as the Women's two-person skiff. The boat features a 0.45m taller rig than the standard 29er, plus carbon fibre construction, double trapeze wires and a masthead kite.

At the ISAF Mid-Year meeting in May this year the 29erXX class was awarded ISAF-recognised status.

The 29erXXs were one of the first classes to sign up to the EUROSAF High Performance Grand Prix as Class President Jennifer Glass says: "We had a lot of very similar feelings about how exciting it would be having the opportunity to try multiple formats and the excitement of being surrounded by other classes that are high performance as well. It just sounded like a great idea."

The format for the 29erXX racing on the bath-warm Mar Menor will include two days of regular fleet racing, plus half or a full day for the Seiko Speed Challenge. The Seiko Speed Challenge will see boats making timed runs with the added attraction of Seiko putting up US\$500 prize money for the winner.

Another day will be spent trying an innovative new race format borrowed from the winter X-Games and Olympics, where it is known as 'snowboard cross'.

"The way it works with snowboarding in the Olympics is that they have some qualifying rounds, where you'll have four snowboarders competing at a time, the top two moving on each time," explains Glass. "It is a way of qualifying part of the fleet on. We'll modify it so that you have two or three tries to qualify, with an eight boat semi-finals."

The courses for the 29erXX cross have yet to be finalised, but are likely to comprise a short upwind start, downwind with some slalom and possibly a reaching finish. "It will be short, focussed on downwind, with definitely some gybing and slalom to it," says Glass. "When it is done with snowboarding in the Olympics there are lots of twists and turns and jumps, so people are fighting for the inside around a corner or the fastest line over a jump. We are looking to translate the same thing into sailing."

Of particular attraction to the 29erXX sailors, says Glass, is that in Murcia the organisers intend to remain flexible over which format of racing they will hold on a particular day. “So you can wake up and see what the conditions are like and choose the right event for that day to make it fun for the sailors. The aim is not to hold the speed challenge on an 8 knot day, we put that on the 15+ knot day. I think that the EUROSAF guys in charge of this event are really creative and willing to try different things and do what is right for the sailing to make it exciting for the spectators. So I look forward to seeing this regatta come off.”

In addition to the US\$500 prize for the winner of the Seiko Speed Challenge, 1000 Euros prize money is up for grabs for the overall 29er winner at the EUROSAF High Performance Grand Prix.

Getting equipment to Murcia can represent a problem, so Nautivela have 29erXXs available for charter. Full details are available on the event website [www.sailingmurcia.com](http://www.sailingmurcia.com)

With the agreement that a Women’s two person skiff will be part of the equipment for Rio 2016, the expectation is that some Olympic sailors looking to move into this class may be competing in Murcia to try their hand at the new discipline.

Jennifer Glass has high hopes for the future of the EUROSAF High Performance Grand Prix, which is to become an annual fixture in the sailing calendar. “Everyone will go home and tell their friends how amazing it was, a warm venue with great conditions and the hotel right there and good prize money. I think next year it will be huge.”

At present 100 entries are registered from three continents and 21 countries.

**Entries remain open for a few days yet, so it is still possible to enter this event**



29erXX Traverunde, 2011