

# McGregor blocked by Hill

## World Ocean Racing Championships

South Africa's Hayley Nixon broke through to become the third ocean racing world champion in as many races, mastering the flat conditions in Hong Kong to storm to an impressive title.

Nixon took the lead after the first turn and never looked back, firstly beating back the challenge from early race leader Teneale Hatton of New Zealand and then withstanding a late challenge from South African teammate, Michelle Burn.

'World champion, I think I'm going to cry. I've been waiting to hear that all my life. It sounds amazing,' Nixon said.

'I had to talk to myself quite a lot. There was never room for complacency. I was looking over my shoulder every 200 metres.

'I couldn't be more proud. I've finished next to a previous world champion and Michelle Burn, who was almost a world champion. I couldn't be prouder but I'm exhausted.

The race turned into more of a marathon event than an ocean race, the flat still conditions in complete contrast to conditions in Hong Kong earlier in the week.

Nixon, who came to ocean racing from a rowing background, said although she would have preferred more challenging conditions the flat water worked to her advantage.

'I think a lot of these girls come from surf lifesaving and big wave backgrounds so they're really lethal in the runs. That's where they're efficient.

'I'm really efficient when it's long and hard. For me, the harder the better. That's where I really get to thrive.'

She also attributed her strength in the water to her decade in rowing.

'I owe a lot of my conditioning and my engine to rowing,' she said.

'The training we did then was ruthless, it was smart and it was ten years of pure conditioning.

'I've basically spent the past four years trying to paddle a ski and mastering the downwind.'

The U23 world title went to Sweden's Linnea Stensils, a World Cup 200 metre gold medallist earlier this year.

'I didn't know when I crossed the finish line that I was first in the U23,' Stensils said.

'I need to improve my aerobic capacity so this is very good training for me. It's been good for me, motivation for going out at home in the cold.

'I've done three ocean races and all have them have been flat. Hopefully, next time there will be some waves.'



The U18 title went to South Africa's Sabina Lawrie.

Australia's Cory Hill tamed wild race conditions to defend successfully his ocean wacing world title, holding off a late challenge from South Africa's canoe marathon world champion, Hank McGregor.

Hill took the lead early and, once again, proved he is the master of the big swell by holding off a strong South African contingent in 3 metre swell with Jasper Moche taking 3rd behind McGregor.

The Australian won the 2015 world championships in similar conditions in Tahiti after finishing 2nd at the very first world championships behind another South African, Sean Rice, in Portugal in 2013.

Despite being a previous world champion, Hill had never won in Hong Kong despite several attempts.

'To be honest, I didn't see anyone for the whole race until we got around Kissing Whales,' Hill said.

'Then I knew Jasper and Hank were right there. I saw two black boats, in fact, and there were a lot of black boats out there so I got confused with who it was.

'I had nightmares about Hank; we've had pretty big duels coming in from Kissing Whales for four or five years and he's got me every single one so I had this nightmare in my head.

'It's just awesome to finally get it, to finally have a win in Hong Kong and to retain that world championship. It's pretty unreal, to be honest, a bit overwhelming.'

McGregor said he thought he had a chance to overhaul the Australian when they turned for the final run to the finish but found Hill too hard to catch.

'It's never over until it's over but he deserves it,' McGregor said.

'We've had a ding dong battle for the last couple of races so today it was reversed. He's a champion; he deserves it.

'We'll see what happens next weekend when we race again.

Hill felt confident heading into the race, especially when he saw the windy conditions. He also felt the best physically that he had for a long time.

'I've actually dropped a couple of kilos so I think that's made a little bit of a difference, too,' Hill said.

'I've always been a bit of a chubby kid. I'm still pretty chubby but I think that makes a little bit of a difference.'

## ICF

**K1M:** 1 C Hill, Australia, 1:31:55. 2 H McGregor, S Africa, 1:32:20. 3 E Moche, S Africa, 1:32:53.



Hayley Nixon.



Cory Hill.



The leaders approaching the finish.

ICF photographs

# DW watered down

## 70th Devizes-Westminster Race

The weather has not been kind to marathon racing this year. The last two Waterside Races were lost to snow and, a week before the Devizes to Westminster Race, the BBC were forecasting more snow for Good Friday in a year with an early Easter. In fact, the weather was generally more moist with a frost overnight to freeze car doors shut. This soon departed, to be replaced by rain, not heavy but persistent until Saturday afternoon. The canal was already full, as was the Thames, so the 70th race looked set to give fast times, despite the easterly headwind.

Friday was the day for the juniors and singles to start the four day stage race. The entry was respectable but a worrying trend in the K1s, the seniors, was that over 70% of the entrants were veterans.



There was a dearth of young adults and a shortage of people promising exciting performances. Indeed, one of the more inspiring entries was Rogers/Jacobs of Dorset Police in the non competitive Endeavour class, a blind paddler in the stern taking on this challenging event for all and going to the eventual finish.

The canal was to be relatively straightforward although restrictions on fence climbing at Dunmill were to be enforced. In London there was to be the risk of obstructions moved about at short notice in connection with the large sewer being constructed beneath the river but that was for another day. The weather meant there were fewer craft on the water and less people on the towpath but the towpath quickly became slippery. Crofton was not run so much as slid, the slope down from