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ZARA IS NUMBER ONE

Zara Davis, UK's queen of speed has taken the top spot on the official International Speed Windsurfing Class ranking. Zara has only been speedsailing competitively for a relatively short space of time and has slowly clawed her way up the ranking list by consistent performances at international events like the European Championships last year in Ireland. During a break from her 'real' life as an osteopath she took time to answer a few questions.

Windsurf: How long have you been involved in competitive speedsailing?
Zara Davis: Since 2005, I went to

Sotavento with an 11 year old F2 Spurnik and some sails kindly lent by Tushingham!!! I only entered at the last minute, this was Pete's dream to compete at Sotavento.

WS: Is being number one, the main goal you set yourself?

ZD: Initially no I just wanted to have fun and the beauty of speed sailing is that it's about you and your relationship with the elements. How you get the best out of yourself rather than a competition with others. As time has gone on, that competition with the other girls has obviously become important but if you focus on the things you can change - your own performance, the results will come. Now my main goal is to go to the Trench if it opens - only 2 women have ever achieved over 40 K, I would like to join that club! Then who knows, if all the elements are right head for the 500m record.

WS: Who are your main competitors for the title?

ZD: Karin Jaggi and Valerie Arrighetti (Ghibadou), they are full time professionals and tough competitors. Karin is the most successful windsurfer of all time and super nice. She is very helpful and a good friend. Valerie is typically French and focused, but the great thing about the women's tour is that the competition is on the water and we try to leave it there!!!

WS: They're full time, you're not, how much of a disadvantage is this?

ZD: I am the first amateur - not being a full time professional is a huge disadvantage. I am sure you can all share the many days when we have to sit at work and watch the trees almost bend in half and we can't go to the beach. In addition, as an Osteopath my diary is very rigid - I can take off what time I want as long as I know 1 month in advance - but the weather forecasters seem to have difficulty in predicting tomorrow!!! Karin told me that she sails 300 days a year - I am lucky if I get 50 days and I don't need to tell you that this winter has been a complete wind drought, I have been on the water a handful of times since WSW last October.

WS: What will it take to stay at the top?

ZD: More practice, keep fit, maintain my training schedule and less ice cream!!!! My success has enabled me to have a better relationship with my sponsors - I have more input into the equipment I use and that's really helped my performance, however the type of testing that Karin and Valerie do with their manufacturers would be out of reach for me.

WS: Sotavento Ladies speed has been cancelled, how do you feel about that?

ZD: Gutted - this year more than any other because the format had changed and I felt I had a great chance. I do

well in windy flat conditions - for any that have been to or seen the pictures of Sotavento they will know it's not flat but extremely technical. This year the course was to be moved around to the flattest windiest part of the beach each day - playing to my strengths. With this and equipment that I am super happy with I had the best chance to beat them both.

WS: What's the next event?

ZD: Who knows - with the current world financial position many events won't happen. It is possible that they may hold the World Championships in Port St Louis in France instead of the Europeans - this will be in September or November- watch this space.

WS: How would you encourage more women to get involved and what does it take?

ZD: I am always disappointed with how few women compete in speed. It's the easiest discipline to get started in. If you can sail in a straight line in the harness and footstraps you can do speed! So this makes it very suitable for women and also you're not on the course with anyone else so it's not competitive in the same way - as I said before it's about challenging yourself and your own limits rather than the combative style of most of the other disciplines. Modern GPS units make it easy to compete with yourself, each other at your local sailing spot, and with people all around the world - for more details on GPS advice check out my website and it will tell you how to set it up and how to get the best out of it. Speed is also a useful tool for learning other things in windsurfing such as carve gybing - use a GPS and study where it all goes wrong on the speed front and then you will improve.

www.zaradavis.co.uk

Zara is sponsored by Simmer, Mistral, Spartan wetsuits, Sonnetag Fins, Dakine, Maui Jim, Walnut Grove Clinic.