

Calling all sailors

Organisers of the Le Tournoi Sailing Challenge are appealing to companies and individuals to join in what is destined to be the biggest single class yacht race in local waters.

Last year, the inaugural challenge saw 15 identical 37ft yachts carry a mixture of novices and experienced crew, between Portsmouth, Cherbourg, Jersey, Guernsey and back to Portsmouth over an eight day period.

Sadly, poor weather conditions on the Guernsey leg of the race meant it had to be cancelled, *'which was such a disappointment,'* said Le Tournoi organiser, Jayne Wilson.

'This year to ensure that this doesn't happen again, we have not only pulled the date forward some five weeks, hopefully guaranteeing better weather, but we have also changed the route ensuring Guernsey does not miss out in any way.'

'Out of 100 or so novices who took part last year, over 60 have signed up with their local yacht clubs to gain more experience and qualifications in anticipation of the 2007 event. This number of trainees is unprecedented and strengthens the Le Tournoi ethos that participation is not limited to the events themselves,' she said.

There is potential for a maximum of 30 boats to take part in the 2007 challenge. Organisers have already had confirmation from 10 companies and are hoping that the whole quota of yachts will be taken up this year.

The offshore yachts are sturdy Jeanneau Sunfast 37s and are leased from Sunsail, the largest yacht charter in the British Isles. Each boat can be chartered with its own fully-qualified skipper and the crew can be a blend of experienced hands and complete novices. However, a business may use their own skipper if he or she has an offshore yachtmaster qualification.

The boats are decorated with corporate livery as part of the entry cost and can be used as the company sees fit for the times available outside the actual racing and practice sessions.

Chamber Patron, Lieutenant Governor, Vice Admiral Sir Fabian Malbon, is also Le Tournoi's Sailing Challenge patron in Guernsey. As a keen sailor, he fully supports the concept of a pan-island charity challenge which will benefit both islands.

'The sailing challenge has my full support and I am confident that it will develop with time, as the other Le Tournoi events have so successfully done,' he said.

Starting in Portsmouth on Tuesday 21 August, the fleet will race to Poole then on to Guernsey, Jersey and Cherbourg before returning to Portsmouth some eight days later.



The start of Le Tournoi Sailing Challenge 2006.

More short races around Herm and Sark have also been built into the programme and an official charity reception will be held in Guernsey on Friday 24 August.

Gareth Nicolle, an audit manager and one of Ernst & Young's crew who took part last year, said that it was an experience he would never forget.

As main sponsors of Le Tournoi, the firm leased two yachts which they filled with employees from both their Jersey and Guernsey offices.

Mr Nicolle said: *'Despite being an experienced sailor, I was slightly apprehensive before the start, but as soon as we were on our way, you have so much to concentrate on, nerves no longer play a part.'*

'The whole week was absolutely fantastic, ranging from the experience of being out at sea for prolonged periods and having to cope in all kinds of weather conditions, to sickness and sleep deprivation – it was an unbelievable team building exercise which I would definitely recommend to any firms or individuals out there looking for a challenge with a difference.'

The organising authority is St Helier Yacht Club and Race Director is Chris Simon, a top international race official.

'Chris is one of the best in the business and to secure his services for a second year is testament to his confidence in what we are doing and demonstrates how serious we are to ensure safety is

paramount,' said Miss Wilson.

Chris Simon is also keen to see the Le Tournoi Sailing Challenge grow.

'As an international race official, I have been involved in many prestigious events, such as the America's Cup and the Volvo Round the World Race, but I am keen to support the real grass roots of sailing. Le Tournoi showed last year that they have created something special and I am confident that the challenge will continue to introduce many newcomers to sailing,' said Mr Simon.

Money raised by Guernsey participants has been pledged to the island's charities. The Le Tournoi ethos is to remain flexible with regard to the charities it supports and funds are available to a number of good causes, often where they are associated with anyone who helps to promote the fundraising. Anyone interested in finding out more about Le Tournoi Sailing Challenge should log on to www.letournoi.org/sailing or e-mail admin@letournoi.org