

Belgian solo sailor, Michel Kleinjans, has confirmed his crew for the Global Ocean Race 2011-12 (GOR). Kleinjans has taken the GOR's Team Entry option which permits a maximum of six crew alternating one crewmember at each stopover and will be racing his new BT Boats Kiwi 40 FC, *Roaring Forty 2*, with British yachtsman and 2008-09 GOR competitor, David Thomson, and fellow Belgian sailor, Ian Wittevrongel - a crewmember with Kleinjans during the 1985-86 Whitbread Round-the-World Race.

In the inaugural 2008-09 edition of the GOR, Kleinjans raced in the single-handed class with his Open 40, *Roaring Forty*, competing against Dutch solo sailor, Nico Budel, on Open 40 *Hayai*. When Budel's yacht developed serious keel fin issues in the early stages of Leg 2 from Cape Town to Wellington, New Zealand, Kleinjans turned *Roaring Forty* westwards and went to assist Budel. As the keel problems became critical on *Hayai*, a rescue operation was launched and coordinated by MRCC Reunion; Budel abandoned his boat and was transferred aboard a bulk carrier, leaving Kleinjans to complete the circumnavigation racing against the event's double-handed Class40 fleet.

The GOR will be his third circumnavigation following the 1984-85 Whitbread Round-the-World Race and the 2008-09 GOR. "The last circumnavigation was an amazing experience, but for most of the race I was competing against myself," explains Kleinjans, who rarely lost touch with the double-handed fleet throughout the circumnavigation. "It is going to be an exciting challenge to fight it out with some serious competition on equal terms," he continues. Kleinjans has twice been voted his county's Yachtsman of the Year by the Belgian Sailing Federation and his solo and double-handed victories include a long list of transatlantic events and record breaking voyages. "Now that we have the right team together, we can really start planning a very competitive campaign," adds Kleinjans.

Last Friday, Kleinjans and David Thomson completed the GOR's mandatory 180 degree inversion test in Nieuwport, Belgium, self-righting *Roaring Forty 2* in 25 minutes as the seventh Class40 in the GOR fleet to pass this vital safety test. "I can't wait to get started and it's really exciting to be sailing with Michel," confirmed Thomson, who will be marrying his girlfriend, Abby, 20 days before the GOR start gun fires in Palma, Mallorca, on 25th September. "We're both really happy with the boat and it's clearly very quick," he comments. During the double-handed, Class40 Normandy Channel Race earlier in the summer - the boat's first race - Kleinjans and his French co-skipper were leading the fleet across the Celtic Sea when *Roaring Forty 2* collided with a semi-submerged cable under tow from a tug, abruptly stopping their race and forcing the duo to retire.

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Following the 180 test, Kleinjans, Thomson and Wittevrongel will be preparing for the team's 2,000-mile, GOR qualifying voyage. "Where we go depends on the wind direction, obviously," says Kleinjans, "but we may well sail around Britain and Ireland," he adds. If the team decide on this route, it will be highly familiar to Kleinjans and Thomson: in 2004, Kleinjans broke the Round Britain and Ireland single-handed record on Open 40 *Roaring Forty* and – two years earlier – Thomson broke the route's multihull record on the late Steve Fossett's maxi-catamaran, *Playstation*. Kleinjans has advised the GOR Race Organisation that there is a very strong possibility of a fourth, top -rank sailor joining the *Roaring Forty 2* team within the next few weeks.

Josh Hall, Race Director of the GOR, is highly impressed with international team on *Roaring Forty 2*: "Michel has chosen a fantastic new Kiwi 40FC as the platform for himself and his 'dream-team' crew to campaign in the GOR," says Hall. "Winning the race is clearly the objective here and with a busy training schedule lined-up, this team will certainly be hitting the Palma start line with all cylinders firing!"

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