



The Kingspan Chieftain in action in the Round Britain and Ireland Yacht Race

Chieftain sets sail for three in a row

By DONAL O'REGAN

LIMERICK property magnate Ger O'Rourke has set his sails in pursuit of his third success in a row in the Round Britain and Ireland Yacht Race.

Ger and his crew on his yacht, Kingspan Chieftain, are currently in the lead in the arduous event which can take up to two weeks to complete.

They are in good form as already this summer they have won a class in the BMW Round Ireland Yacht Race and competed strongly at Cork week international sailing event at Crosshaven.

The boat and crew set off at 6pm this Monday from Cowes in England and went straight into the lead.

On Tuesday morning, the day after the race started, Ger O'Rourke spoke via satellite phone



Kingspan Chieftain's Ger O'Rourke

and explained the situation.

"Kingspan Chieftain had a great start and after three hours of racing we were just off St Catherine's Point and in the lead on corrected time," said Mr O'Rourke. They remain in the

lead but are facing some very severe weather conditions off the west coast of Ireland.

Kingspan Chieftain's navigator Jochem Visser says they are beating into head winds gusting up to 33 knots.

"It is really uncomfort-

able down below and really wet on deck," says Mr Visser.

A total of 28 boats started the race but at the very most only 25 will finish. Three boats have already retired underlying the difficulties yachts and crews

face in this race.

The gruelling event is run over a racecourse distance of approximately 1,789 miles. They begin on the South Coast of England move westwards into the Celtic Sea and continue around Great Britain and Ireland.

This is Mr O'Rourke's latest voyage and judging on previous form he is set to go very close as he has won events on both sides of the equator.

The successful property developer's yacht claimed class honours in the Sydney to Hobart Race 2005, it crossed the line to win the IRC Class Zero UK National Championship.

While sailing and work are a huge part of his life he says they come only second and third to his wife and three children.

And he managed to combine two of the above when he was joined by his daughter Deirdre O'Rourke on board as one of the crew during Cork Week.

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