



# The Olympic fleet

2012 will live forever in the memory as an amazing sporting and boating year ... **Words: Paul Glatzel**

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The spectacular Thames Pageant for the Queen's Jubilee got the marine festivities rolling and the Olympics presented another great opportunity to see boats of all sorts, this time from around the globe. The Olympic TV coverage showed plenty of glimpses of RIBs, catamarans and numerous security craft, but what was the story behind the cameras?

By 2007, in the build-up to the Games, teams were in place at the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and the various security agencies to determine the requirements for each of the events. For boaters, the huge expanse of Weymouth Bay offered some amazing opportunities to get afloat during the competition, and many wanted to know what those opportunities were and how to get involved.

Through various events in preparation for the Games, a team

of volunteers was established to run and man these events over the years running up to 2012. This culminated in the full-scale Olympic rehearsal at the Sail for Gold 2012 test event in 2011. Volunteers were identified to drive and man-marshall boats on and around the courses, to drive craft that would act as relay stations to send timing signals back to shore from the courses, and to run boats laying the

course marks. In all, this amounted to a need to helm and crew about 50 boats on the busiest days of racing.

LOCOG identified the craft to undertake these roles and a contract for the supply of 64 RIBs was awarded to Ribcraft. All the RIBs were Suzuki powered and they included twenty 7.8m boats with 200hp engines, with the remainder being 5.85s sporting either 90 or 140 hp four-strokes.

LOCOG also bought a fleet of 20 ex-Americas Cup Yamaha-powered Protector RIBs.

Beneteau were also awarded a contract, for the supply of 50 boats, of which 32 were to be used in 2012 and 18 for the test event in 2011. The Beneteaus fulfilled a variety of functions, with the larger Swift Trawlers playing host to VIPs and the 'Olympic Family' while the smaller 34s ferried the 'written media' out to the courses.

The overall broadcasters – Olympic Broadcast Services (OBS) – filmed the events and sold the rights to other countries wanting to televise the games. To do this, OBS chartered four large catamarans to which they fitted gyro-stabilised cameras which fed footage straight back to their base on shore for live broadcast. During the event, a Cheetah catamaran and a



Protector RIB were added to the fleet and fitted with the gyros as these created less wash than the cats. OBS also had approximately 10 Ribeye and Ribcraft RIBs acting as platforms for TV crewmen, and ferried kit between boats and the shore.

The OBS gyro boats and their RIBs flew pink flags, and woe betide anyone who got themselves between these craft and their filming targets! Next in the boat pecking order were the 'OBS Green' craft "international TV companies could decide to send their own crews to cover the event and these crews could book slots on these RIBs. Behind the 'OBS Green' RIBs were the 'OBS Media' RIBs which carried the photographers.

Providing complete security cover was critical, of course, and there was a need to balance locking down the course area with allowing the boating public reasonable access to Weymouth Harbour and parts of the bay. The plan was that the

Weymouth Beach areas, around the viewing area of the Nothe and in the shallower areas of Portland Harbour, a different solution was needed and Dorset police chose Yamaha to supply seven Waverunner VX Cruisers for shallow-water operations. The final piece in the police jigsaw was the provision of two large jet-powered MOD patrol boats which travelled from their base in Scotland to give a 24-hour all-weather presence in the bay.

Other organisations were very involved in the event too, with the Portland harbour master vessels patrolling the harbour and managing the corridors between the secure areas, with craft from the Maritime Volunteer Service working alongside them. G4S had two RIBs patrolling the entrance to the marina, and the Sea Cadets had their training vessel, John Jerwood, providing support throughout the event.

The Olympics will never occur

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three 'race tracks' in Weymouth Bay would be surrounded by a series of marker buoys that represented a total exclusion zone for all non-Olympic craft. The edges of each of these exclusion zones were patrolled by a mixture of police and Royal Marine craft. The police chartered 43 RIBs from Solent Rib Charter, who also supplied a full workshop and support team to keep the craft running smoothly during the event. The navy supplied HMS Bulwark plus numerous craft and the area was constantly patrolled by one of its helicopters.

At the outer edge of the exclusion zone a variety of commercial fishing boats were chartered by Quality Time to act as a first line of alert. Along the

again in the UK in my lifetime and being there was a privilege, made all the more so by observing the camaraderie between the on-water teams, the police and military personnel, which was outstanding. And while there was a serious job to be done, everyone seemed to have a great time. Brazil.2016.- here I come!

#### INFORMATION



Paul Glatzel is an RYA Powerboat Trainer and Examiner and runs Powerboat Training UK in Poole, Dorset. In the run-up to the Olympics he undertook the training of crews, and during the games he worked for Solent Rib Charter.

