

Draft Media Release

KAIKOHE

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Northland's Team Inspiration confirms Beijing berth

At the world yachting championships in Cascais, Portugal, yesterday, Top Energy sponsored Team Inspiration, has confirmed a New Zealand Yngling women's Olympic class keelboat place for next year's Beijing Olympic Games.

Skipper Sharon Ferris, with crew Raynor Smeal and Shandy Buckley managed their best result of the season so far, by securing 6th place overall in the Worlds and finishing 7th in the medals race.

According to Ferris the conditions in the medals race were shifty and difficult and the Team was disappointed with that result. But she was happy with her team's performance for the championship. "Overall, we're very, very happy with the result. We did what we came here to do", she said.

This year's Yngling Worlds, were contested by 35 boats and sailed in very difficult conditions at times. At one stage during the regatta racing was postponed with over 30 knot winds and lumpy seas in Cascais Bay. However, the trio won two races during the series, bouncing right back from a disastrous 28th placing in race 5 - after their boat was knocked down and swamped when a severe squall ripped through the fleet.

Ferris represented New Zealand in the Yngling in the 2004 Olympic Games, where she finished seventh. Both Smeal and Buckley are new crew members for Beijing. All three women are from Northland.

At a local level, Top Energy's sponsorship of Team Inspiration's Olympic build-up gives Team Inspiration the opportunity to put something back into yachting in the Far North - through the co-sponsored annual recreational/educational event, Top Energy Sailing Week.

According to Top Energy Chief executive, Roger de Bray, "Top Energy Sailing Week is hugely successful and arguably the biggest single kids training event staged in the Far North each year. Although Lake Manuwai, Kerikeri is a far cry from world class sailing in Cascais Bay, Portugal, I know Sharon, Raynor and Shandy get a tremendous thrill from coming back here at the end of each season and sharing their knowledge, skills and inspiration with our kids."

de Bray also believes the Team Inspiration, Top Energy Sailing Week connection fits well with other educational and business awards sponsorships his company supports, such as WaterSafe - which teaches the region's primary school kids to swim and be safe around water; the Far North Science & Technology Fair – a hands-on way to promote science and technology to secondary school students and at the same time help them to develop investigative and problem solving life-skills; the School-to-work Programme – which provides scholarships for senior students wanting to get paid part-time work experience while still at school; Enterprise 4 Education – a programme designed to develop an enterprise culture in secondary schools, by delivering the whole curriculum in a way where students can see the relevance of their learning – and to help them develop into enterprising people and finally, The Tall Poppy Business Awards – set up to recognise and celebrate excellence in business practice, throughout the region. END.

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