

Media Release
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Top yachswomen achieve World #1 Ranking

2006 has got off to a flying start for three Northland yachswomen, as they continue their build up to contesting Gold at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Team Inspiration headed by skipper, Sharon Ferris, with Raynor Smeal and Ashley Holtum as crew, has recently been named as the top Yngling team in the world. The Yngling is a strict one-design women's Olympic Class keel boat.

Their International Yachting Federation World #1 Ranking follows consistent performances sailed in the Rolex OCR and US Nationals regattas late last year, where they campaigned a brand new boat.

Say's Raynor Smeal, "It's really exciting to see our names at the top of the ISAF ranking list. It's quite an honour and a great incentive and motivation for us to keep training hard – to race as well as we can in Europe this season, with the aim of staying at the top."

Team Inspiration is sponsored by Top Energy. According to Top Energy Chief Executive, Roger de Bray, "On an international level, it's great to see Team Inspiration's consistent performances being rewarded with their World # 1 Ranking. On a local level, our sponsorship of Team Inspiration gives the Team an opportunity to put something back into yachting in the Far North. For example, Sharon, Raynor and Ashley, along with helpers and some keen mums and dads, put 120 kids through a sailing training programme over one weekend during the inaugural Top Energy Sailing Week on Lake Manuwai. It was a hugely successful event and possibly the biggest single training event for kids ever staged in the Far North."

Mr 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; the Young Entrepreneur Programme - providing training and mentoring for senior students and school leavers on how to establish their own businesses and finally, The Tall Poppy Business Awards – set up to recognise and celebrate excellence in business practice, throughout the region.

“The Team Inspiration ethos, of doing everything to the very best of their ability, is an inspiration to our young people and there are direct parallels between sporting and business excellence. Team Inspiration’s involvement with Top Energy Sailing Week will be an ongoing annual event and we’ll be inviting Sharon to share some of her experiences and insights with our young people and business leaders as further opportunities arise”, Mr de Bray said. END.