

EIGHT TO COMPETE IN EPIC BOAT RACE AROUND FLORIDA

A 1,200-mile, round-the-clock paddle and sailing challenge – in 30 days or less

Eight intrepid mariners will compete in a month-long small boat adventure race called the Ultimate Florida Challenge. The race is scheduled to start at 7 a.m. on March 6 near the entrance to Tampa Bay.

The course is a 1,200-mile counter-clockwise circumnavigation of Florida in 30 days or less. It is open to boats propelled by human and/or wind power only. No tows, no rides.

The setup is similar to Alaska's Iditarod, except instead of dog sleds this race is among canoes, kayaks, and sailboats.

"I designed the Ultimate Florida Challenge to be the toughest adventure/endurance race for small boats anywhere in the world," said Steve Isaac, founder and "Chief" of the WaterTribe, which sponsors the Florida Challenge. Isaac, a former US Marine, is one of the eight boaters competing in the 2010 Florida Challenge.

"I've wanted to compete in this race for years, and I'm not getting any younger," he said. "Now's the time."

The race rules are simple: First one back to Tampa Bay wins.

Another rule: Competitors must be able to drag their boats without assistance off the launch beach and into the Gulf of Mexico at the start of the race. This rule is designed to filter out larger, faster boats from the competition.

In addition to Isaac, the challengers include a boat designer from Jensen Beach, Fla., a commercial pilot from Raleigh, N.C., a professor at University of South Florida from Tampa, Fla., a truck driver from Staten Island, N.Y., a retiree from Fort Myers, Fla., a utility superintendent from Delray Beach, Fla., and a boat builder from Irons, Mich.

Challengers must complete the course within the 30-day deadline or be disqualified. In north Florida, they face a 40-mile portage on foot (towing their boat behind them) between the St. Marys River and the Suwannee River.

The current Ultimate Florida Challenge record was set in 2006 in a kayak: 19 days, 6 hours, 48 minutes. It involved round-the-clock paddling and a very sore butt. The second-place boat, an expedition sailing canoe, arrived at the finish line 50 minutes later.

Modern GPS tracking units allow race officials and anyone with internet access to follow each race participant in real time as they make their way around Florida. Race commentary, a locator map, and other official information, including media contacts for the racers, are available on the WaterTribe website at www.WaterTribe.com.

The March 6 start of the Ultimate Florida Challenge coincides with the start of two other WaterTribe races, the annual 300-mile Everglades Challenge from Tampa Bay to Key Largo, and a 67-mile “ultra marathon” from Tampa Bay to Placida, near Boca Grande.

With three races starting at once, more than 50 boats will be launching simultaneously. Preparations begin Friday afternoon, March 5.

The launch beach is located on Mullet Key at Fort DeSoto State Park south of St. Petersburg.

**The 2010 Ultimate Florida Challenge
1200 Miles and a 40-Mile Portage
Circumnavigate Florida Starting at Tampa Bay
March 6 - April 4, 2010**

Full Details at: www.watertribe.com/Events/UlimateFloridaChallenge

Video Captures WaterTribe Spirit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AbPpuZ-BPs .

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