Thundercat Racing Team, ‘Team Microlink’ choose Icom for VHF Comms

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Icom UK have sponsored Team Microlink, a Thundercat Powerboat racing team from Southampton, UK. The team races a 4 metre powerboat fitted with a 50hp engine capable of racing at speeds up to 70mph (60 knots). The team comprises James Tapp, who pilots and drives the boat and Dan Alldis, the navigator, who is in charge of weight distribution (moving forwards and backwards and side to side for stability when manoeuvering). The team use Icom IC-M71 VHF Marine Transceivers with earpieces and boom mics attached to their crash helmets to provide communications in what is one of the toughest water sports.

Team Microlink race in the UK RYA National Thundercat Powerboat Series which includes 6 weekends of competition, around the UK, including; Cornwall, Kent, Cardiff and Hampshire. They race in all conditions, from flat water to high surfy conditions in Cornwall and even 60 mile Longhaul races!

The team is currently second in the National Championships having won 4 of the 6 National Stages so far this year. But unfortunately lost points one weekend due to engine issues in a Longhaul Race. The team are currently 3 points behind the leaders which means they are in a good chance to become National Champions at the end of the year!

So what are the difficulties in taking part in this sport? Dan said, ‘The speed of the boats makes it extremely physically demanding, with crews needing a lot of stamina to get through the 20 minute races. In lumpy conditions the ride can be extremely hard, and there can be really big impacts, leading to sore bums and ribs! Going at such a high speed and with a loud engine it can be extremely hard to hear each other, especially as we have to wear full face helmets’.

So why do you need VHF radio comms? He said, ‘We use radio communications because it allows us to communicate over the sound of the engine and to discuss aspects of the race. The
radios are great whilst training as we can talk about set up and rectify any issues. It was often the case that taps and shouts were used to communicate, often being confused for other things, so having the opportunity to talk to each other is great!’

So why use Icom? Dan said, ‘I have always used Icom through my National Squad coaching days with RS boats and the RYA. I have always been impressed with the way they perform and the battery life has always been good. This is why I approached Icom’. Ian Lockyer, Marketing Manager at Icom UK Ltd said, ‘You can follow Team Microlink progress via their website www.teammicrolink.co.uk. Their Facebook address is ‘Team Microlink – GBR 22’ and Twitter is @Team22TRT. On behalf of everyone at Icom, the very best of luck for the rest of the season’.