

The West Australian

Cory Hill, Jemma Smith top seeds for iconic Shaw and Partners 27km Doctor from Rottnest Island to Sorrento



Cory Hill and Jemma Smith are the top seeds. Credit: Shane Myers/KM Media

Gold Coast paddler Cory Hill and 2022 ocean ski world champion Jemma Smith from the NSW Central Coast have been named top seeds for Saturday's Shaw and Partners 27km Doctor from Rottnest Island to Sorrento– the finale of the five-event WA Race Week.

Four-time winner of the Doctor, Hill is considered Australia's No. 1 endurance paddler and holds the record for the Rottnest to Sorrento crossing, 1hr 33min20sec set in 2017.

“Number one is nice, but I don't feel the pressure of a ranking as each race is a new start. A new gun goes off and we are all on the same start line,” Hill said.

“There is a lot of talent and the top ten from last Saturday's West Coast Downwinder was different to the top ten at the world championships. It is super competitive and in

my opinion, the number one favourite will change day by day, race by race,” Hill, 33, said.

Newly crowned world champion Kenny Rice of South Africa is seeded two, with countryman and veteran Hank McGregor, who won the Doctor in 2016, three.

Hill and Smith are in winning form, both taking out the opening bout of WA Race Week on Saturday, the Fenn West Coast Downwinder from Fremantle to Sorrento.



Smith, 23, has paddled the downwind Doctor twice, in 2018 and 2019, but is yet to salute.

The ironwoman is in career best form, having claimed the world title in Portugal in September, but has focused on paddling this year rather than spreading herself across the four disciplines of surf sport.

After returning from the worlds, she won both the Coolangatta Gold surfski race and the North Bondi Classic.

“There’s a big week ahead so we will see what unfolds,” she said.

Cory Hill and Jemma Smith ahead of the race. Credit: Shane Myers/KM Media

“This field is world class, probably even tougher than the world champs and there’s a lot of strategy and luck in the crossing from Rotto to the coast. Number one seed is all good, but I’m not putting myself under any pressure. Five races, one race at a time.”

She will be challenged by Kiwi and No. 2 seed Danielle McKenzie, who is the Doctor defending champion and record holder after her 2019 victory (1hr. 47min. 16sec.) and also owns the Australian surf ski title. South Africa’s top paddler Michelle Burn is seeded three.

More than 600 paddlers are competing in Race Week and the 19th running of the Doctor.

Competitors will race two 11km races, the Dr Ben Hewitt Sunset Series from Fremantle to City Beach on Tuesday and Thursday at 5pm, as well as Friday morning’s Dash for Cash – a sprint event on Sorrento Beach.

WA Race Week is the richest ocean racing series in the world, with \$265,000 in prizemoney on offer over the five races, and has attracted the world’s best from world champions to Olympians, ironmen, ironwomen and surf star greats of the past 20 years.