

RACING

SWIFTSURE COVERAGE VIA DRONES



The 2016 Swiftsure Race, with a starting gun on May 28, will be witnessed by an eye in the sky: for the first time a professional drone operator, David Carlos, of Victoria Aerial Photos and Surveys, will use his DJI Phantom drone to photograph the race's starts. Chad Grice, the media and promotion chair for Swiftsure, explained that the aerial footage will be part of a much more interactive tone the race will set this year. "Once the excitement of the start is over, there's a blank period when the boats sail up the Juan de Fuca Strait," said Grice. "We will stream the start footage once it's available to allow spectators and the racers' families and friends to see it. Swiftsure chair Vern Burkhardt and I will be interviewing racers under way and stream the coverage on social media too."

David Carlos will set up his equipment on a beach

near the Clover Point/Beacon Hill starts. "It will include a ground control station with a joystick," said Carlos. "By law and for safety, we must keep 100-feet away from people. Once we get the raw photographic data, we'll need to cut and edit. I'm hoping to stream it fairly quickly on YouTube—even during the race itself and certainly by the end."

Most of us first learned about drones from military applications—the term "drone strikes" is almost a cliché. But the technology has recently exploded in civilian life with such tasks as assessing farm irrigation needs, penetrating smoky wildfires, participating in search and rescue, policing neighbourhoods, selling real estate, tracking whales, filming unusual shots for Hollywood productions, and photographing just about anything that can be captured by pixels.

Yacht owners have hired

drone operators to view their vessel under sail, and various races have featured drone footage live.

Drone operation is strictly regulated. We all remember the illegal drones that grounded the helicopters scooping up water during last summer's wildfires. "To operate a drone, you must have earned a Transport Canada Special Flight Operator Certificate," said Carlos. "And you must coordinate with Air Traffic Control to ensure you don't interfere with helicopters, floatplanes, any type of aircraft. Unless you're certified, you cannot fly a drone within nine kilometres of any aerodrome, and that includes hospital helipads. Violators can go to jail and face a \$25,000 fine."

Carlos is certified and thus Swiftsure aficionados will be able to see the various starts. All the race will need is some wind.

—Marianne Scott

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