

McEwan heads for world championships in Sicily

Barry McEwan intends to fish in the Bass Rock Shore Angling League winter series on Wednesday, just two days before jetting to Sicily for the world championships.

The Port Seton-based angler, who is treasurer of the Bass Rock club, is in a five-strong squad, plus a travelling reserve, heading for Catania, at the foot of Mount Etna, an active volcano.

Wednesday's match is round three of the winter series and it is a North Berwick Rover with boundaries from one of the town's golf courses to the other.

Registration is at North Berwick Harbour from 6pm until 6.30pm with fishing from 7pm to 10pm and secretary James Ogilvie said only sizeable fish should be weighed in.

The scales close at 10.20pm and it is usual £10 entry fee with a 100 per cent payout, 50/50 split between the heaviest bag and the heaviest fish.

McEwan made his debut for the Tartan Team in the Home Internationals in Dorset last year and he is in a new-look Scotland side who have been training hard for the world event, with regular sessions around the Scottish coastline.

Captain Billy Buckley admitted it was difficult to replicate the conditions they will face in the Mediterranean and that is why they jet to the bustling Italian port of Catania, the

industrial, logistical and commercial centre of Sicily, which is on the east coast, at the foot of Mount Etna, an active volcano, well ahead of the competition to practice before the competition starts on November 4.

Buckley from Uddingston is the only member of the five-man squad plus a reserve to have fished in a world team event before, but he does not see that as a negative as a team of debutants came fifth in a previous event.

The current squad, which also includes Michael McLaughlin (Cumbernauld), Nuno Santos (Glasgow), plus Calum Culbert (Aberdeen), are keen to learn.

They will be accompanied by reserve Neil McMillan from Stevenston in Ayrshire who will have a key role to play as a runner, passing vital information along the beach during competition.

Fishing is for four hours each day, with sessions in the morning and also into darkness, and the Scots will be using light lines around 0.14 in diameter, about 5lb, to cast further, over 200m, running the risk of snapping the line if a big fish grabs the hook.

Bream, garfish and bass are the likely species with three baits allowed, including arenicola marina, a blow lugworm, and shrimp, and the Tartan team will use small hooks from six 6 to 12.

Two or three hook flapper rigs or Portugese rigs will be used and the knowledge of Portugal-born Santos could be a real asset here as he has fished waters like Sicily before.

The Scots will use either pyramid or rolling leads as the tidal flow is light, around 1.5m, unlike Scotland, and Buckley said: "The guys are all extremely experienced domestic anglers who have come through the qualifying to get to this stage. "Yes, it is a new team, I'm the only one who has fished

in a world team event before, but Michael (McLaughlin) and I won silver in the world Pairs in France last year.

“The rest of the guys are open to ideas which is tremendous and the last time we had a similar team at world level we came fifth in France.”

Scotland are back at the world level after a gap caused by COVID-19 and they were mid-table when they last competed and that was in South Africa.

Buckley added: “The last time we fished in Italy we came sixth but Scotland have won the world championship before on British-style beaches. We fish well in Ireland and Denmark and England as these are conditions we are used to.”

PICTURE: Bary McEwan pictured at Dunbar Harbour during one of the Bass Rock Summer Series matches. Picture by ***Nigel Duncan***