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As the Ocean BlackLion readies for departure from Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) shipyard in Ulsan, South Korea, her cousin rig is berthed nearby in a much earlier stage of construction. The Ocean GreatWhite is Diamond Offshore's latest newbuild—a gargantuan ultra-deepwaterharsh-environment semisubmersible that will be fini-

shed in 2016 and bound for Australia to work for BP. Diamond Offshore was faced with finding crews for this rig simultaneously with crewing the BlackLion. After a brief stumble out of the starting blocks the effort has hit full stride, and outstanding crewmembers are now gearing up to get the GreatWhite drilling deep.

GREATWHITE ATTACK

A GIGANTIC CREWING CHALLENGE COMES FROM DOWN UNDER.

“This was a big challenge at first,” says Karen Roll, Diamond Offshore’s Manager of Staffing Services. “The rig is headed for Australia so most of the crew will be Australian, and our HR group there has never been involved with a crew up. And we needed to find a lot of highly qualified people. First we brought the HR team over to Houston so they could get up to speed on our process. Then we moved one of our own managers over there to lead the effort. Now it’s going very well.”

Dave Brown is Project Manager for the *Great White* construction. He’s been with the rig since it was a mere sheet of hull metal on the floor of a fabrication bay. Now much of the rig is finished, and select new crewmembers, primarily supervisors, mechanics and electricians, are streaming in to oversee the final stages. Brown says that in the beginning, many of them were like fish out of water.

“This is a different mindset for these people,” says Brown. “They have to be focused on building versus operating. A lot of these guys were a little nervous to come in here and work, because they’d never been in a shipyard environment. But what I tell them is that they have a bird’s nest on the ground. They have a unique opportunity here because they will have the time to really learn the systems before we go out working. Right now we don’t have the burden of keeping the rig working and earning a dayrate. These guys have time to study the drawings, learn the systems and inspect the components as they come online. And the prize at the end of it is that they get a brand new rig.”

Close on the heels of recruiting the crew and finishing the rig is the task of preparing it for BP. The company will require a series of acceptance tests before flipping the dayrate switch to “on.”

Typically when a rig moves from shipyard to drilling site there is ample time to prepare for these tests in transit. Not so with the *Great White*. South Korea is relatively close to Australia, so mobilization time will be short. The extra catch is that the rig won’t have full crews until after Diamond Offshore takes delivery from Hyundai. Many of the crewmembers will be seeing the rig for the first time. To deal with this, Brown says they will be doing something a little unusual. “We will just take some extra time to train everyone before signaling to BP that we are ready to take the acceptance tests. It does us no good to rush and get something out there. We have to be sure this rig is ready to work. Our objective isn’t just to get the rig delivered, but to get it working properly, and to have the new crew working properly. That’s the end game here.”

