

Dee Caffari, MBE

Profile

Inspirational Yachtswoman: the First Woman to Circumnavigate the World ‘the wrong way’

‘We can do more than we think we can. We just have to dare to dream.’
Dee Caffari

Dee Caffari sailed into the record books on 18 May 2006. Dee became the first woman to circumnavigate the world ‘the wrong way’ against the prevailing winds and currents, solo, non-stop. It is an extraordinary achievement. Only four men have ever managed to finish this route before. Dee’s courage, determination and motivation to complete the 29,100mile voyage that took her nearly six months to complete has inspired many. Her imaginative descriptions of the wildlife, the conditions and the tough challenges she faced won Dee many fans world-wide as they logged on to check her honest, and often very humorous, entries in her daily online diary onboard her yacht Aviva.

Not one to stay long in her comfort zone, Dee has launched a campaign for a new world first. Dee now plans to become the first woman to sail solo, non-stop around the world in both directions. Dee’s next campaign, sponsored by Aviva, takes her into the highly competitive world of Open 60 racing, culminating with her entry into the 2008/9 Vendée Globe. Dee has proved herself to be a yachtswoman of the highest calibre – Dee now aims to prove that she can be fast as well as tough.

A former schoolteacher, Dee’s life changed dramatically when she dared to follow her dream and her love of the sea and become a skipper. In no less than five years, Dee had proven her skills and talents and risen to the top of a very male-dominated profession. Her gregarious, engaging character and her ability to lead and bring out the very best in others became apparent when she was selected to lead a team of amateurs in the tough Global Challenge Yacht Race in 2004/5. The only woman skipper in the race, Dee inspired her crew of 18 by handling the demanding and often frightening conditions of the Southern Ocean: during this leg of the race, Dee oversaw the largest ocean rescue in that area when one of her crew-members had to be airlifted off the yacht. Dee’s leadership skills saved his life. Dee won a coveted BP Safety Prize as well as a Media Prize for her ability to write with refreshing candour and creativity in the daily log.

Dee knows the importance of having self-belief and facing your fears. And she knows how important inspirational mentors can be. For Dee, her late father remains one of the most significant figures in her life, not only for giving her a love of the ocean but also for giving her the confidence to take on Nature at her most frightening, and yet her most beautiful, alone at sea. (At one point in

Dee's solo circumnavigation, the nearest people to her were Astronauts on the International Space Station.)

Dee was born in Hertfordshire and now lives in Southampton. Dee trained and worked as a schoolteacher for several years before moving on to manage a Sports College. With her sailing qualifications completed, Dee then began working in the sailing industry for a company run by inspirational sailor Mike Golding. This opportunity gave her extensive experience of racing, including a Fastnet race and two trans-Atlantic races.

It was when Dee saw the start of the 2000/01 BT Global Challenge Race that she began to focus on where she wanted to be in four years time. A job as a skipper in Formula 1 Sailing led to an opportunity to manage the fleet in the UK and the Caribbean, giving Dee important experience in big boat racing and increased confidence in her seamanship. She was then selected as one of the skippers for the 2004/5 Global Challenge Race. It was while she was leading her crew during this race that Dee's desire to achieve one of few genuine 'firsts' began to develop.

Dee has faced the dangers of icebergs; tempestuous storms and the worst the Southern Ocean could muster. Sailing Aviva, a 72ft yacht designed for a crew of 18, Dee frequently missed sleep: at one point getting only 9 hours in 9 days. Without doubt, one of Britain's most inspirational women, Dee tells her dramatic story with great grace, humour and insight. Her sense of fun and positive world-view ensure her presentations are entertaining and her messages about self-belief, motivation, building confidence, leadership, teamwork and over-coming your self-limitations are memorable. If appropriate, Dee's presentation can include dramatic film footage from her round the world voyage. Vivacious. Gregarious. Inspirational. Funny. Courageous. Dee offers 'An Empower Hour', a keynote and an after dinner speech to remember. As Dee puts it: 'Dare... Dream... Discover...'