

Dee Caffari, MBE

Profile

Inspirational Yachtswoman: the First Woman to Sail around the World solo, non-stop, in both directions

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

British Yachtswoman **Dee Caffari** has sailed into the history books. In May 2006, Dee became the first woman to circumnavigate the world solo 'the wrong way' (against the prevailing winds and currents). It is an extraordinary achievement. Only four men have ever managed to finish this gruelling route before: more people have walked on the moon. In recognition of her first world record, Dee was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday honours list.

Not one to stay in her comfort zone, Dee launched a campaign for a new world record just months after her first solo circumnavigation. Dee announced that she wanted to become the first woman to sail solo, non-stop around the world in *both* directions. In order to do this Dee entered the highly competitive world of Open 60 racing. Dee faced a daunting task. She aimed to compete against the best international sailors in a race held every four years 'the right way' around the world. After one of the most dramatic Vendée Globes ever known (2008/09), Dee and her yacht 'Aviva' finished a triumphant sixth on the 16 February 2009 and claimed a double world-first. Dee has proven herself to be a yachtswoman of the highest calibre and many are amazed to learn that she only began her sailing career in 2000.

Dee's courage, determination and motivation to complete both voyages alone have inspired many. Dee knows the importance of having self-belief, facing your fears, being motivated when times are tough, staying focused, coping with set-backs and remaining positive as conditions inevitably change. Dee fully appreciates the importance of the team behind the scenes (on the shore) who are so vital in preparing the boat, as well as helping her achieve high performance and ultimately, success.

The first solo voyage took nearly six months: the second, 99 days. During the first challenge, Dee faced the worst that the Southern Ocean could muster and had to negotiate icebergs, storms, sleep deprivation and prolonged isolation. The second challenge, the Vendée Globe is widely known as 'the Everest of the Seas' and the 'Olympics' of offshore racing: it is a war of attrition with many boats failing to complete the race. Nursing a damaged mainsail and passing through hurricane-strength storms to reach the finish line, Dee has shown skilled seamanship, tremendous courage, initiative and competitive spirit: she has proved that she can be fast as well as tough.

On her return from the Vendée Globe in 2009, Dee decided it was time to challenge a record a little closer to home: the Round Britain and Ireland monohull speed record. Onboard her Open 60, Dee led an all-woman crew to attempt the record. Dee knows that in sport as well as business, having the right team is vital to success. On 22 June 2009, sailing 1800 miles around Britain and Ireland, the girls crossed the finish line to complete the course in 6 days 11 hours (breaking the record by a staggering 17 hours and 16 minutes).

Dee was born in Hertfordshire in 1973 and now lives in Southampton. Dee trained and worked as a PE teacher for several years before moving on to manage a Sports College. 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. Dee made the tough decision to join the marine industry and her life changed dramatically when she dared to follow her dream and her love of the sea and become a skipper. With her sailing qualifications completed, through sheer determination, Dee began working in her new career, rapidly building her experience and reputation. 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 racing and increased confidence in her seamanship.

In no less than five years, Dee had proven her skills and talents. Her gregarious, engaging character and her ability to bring out the 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 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 communicate her experiences with refreshing candour, passion, humour and clarity.

It was while she was leading her crew during this race, and encouraged by Sir Chay Blyth's belief in her, Dee's desire to achieve one of the few genuine world 'firsts' began to develop. Having led a team of 18 around the world, Dee worked hard on her return to win the sponsorship necessary to follow her dream: just four months later, she set out to achieve a world first in the same 72 foot yacht that was now adapted for a solo sailor. As the first ever woman to complete solo circumnavigations in both directions, Dee is now highly respected as one of the top offshore sailors in the world.

With a passion for sport and exercise, Dee is an Ambassador for Active Southampton promoting 30 minutes of exercise a day. Her keen interest in health and life-balance stems from her roots as a secondary school PE teacher. Dee continues to have links with Leeds Metropolitan University's Sports Science Department and has a keen interest in the science and psychology behind high performance. A strong desire to face and overcome challenges has led Dee into adventures outside the sailing environment too. One such challenge was leading a female team over 6500km of rugged

terrain in the Mark Webber Pure Tasmania Challenge. The focus was to raise money for cancer charities and Dee has since become the Patron for the charity Sail4Cancer. A love of the ocean and the British coastline has seen Dee become an Ambassador for the RYA Green Blue Campaign to help everyone reduce, re-use and recycle.

Without doubt, one of Britain's most inspirational women, Dee tells her dramatic and inspirational 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. Dee's presentations include dramatic film footage and photographs from her round the world voyages. Dee has spoken to international audiences on many occasions and has experience of working with translators at speaking engagements.

Among a variety of awards, Dee received the prestigious Raymarine Yachtsman of the Year Award and the Royal Variety Award for Sporting Courage in 2007. She was the winner of the BBC South Yachtswoman of the Year and has received an honorary doctorate from Leeds Metropolitan University.

Dee's story has featured in the media across the world. Dee's experiences of coping with sleep deprivation featured in BBC One's '10 Things You Need to Know about Sleep' in 2009 and a Channel 4 documentary on the Vendee Globe. Her autobiography 'Against the Flow: The inspiring story of a teacher turned record-making Yachtswoman' is available in English, French, German and Italian.

Available for: After Dinner Events: Conference Keynote Talks; Awards Ceremonies: Sales Events: Product Launches; Business Talks; Sporting Dinners.