

Racing

Elite Female Sailors Sign on for Volvo Ocean Race

As teams shore up rosters for the start of the Volvo Ocean Race's Leg 0 this week, two elite women join the ranks of AkzoNobel and Turn the Tide on Plastic.

By Volvo Ocean Race August 1, 2017

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Matine Grae, the winner of the 49erFX gold medal at the Rio Olympics turns her focus to offshore racing with Team AkzoNobel.

Amalia Infante/Volvo Ocean Race

Matine Grae, Olympic Gold Medal Winner Joins AkzoNobel

Team AkzoNobel have added Martine Grae, the Brazilian sailing gold medallist from the 2016 Olympics in Rio, to their crew for the Volvo Ocean Race 2017-18.

The 26-year-old is the daughter of race legend Torben Grae – Brazil's most successful Olympic sailor of all-time, with five medals – and she will be joining an AkzoNobel squad that features three members of her father's all-conquering Ericsson 4 team in 2008-09: British navigator Jules Salter, and watch leaders Brad Jackson from New Zealand and the Brazilian Joca Signorini.

Together with Kahena Kunze, Grae clinched gold in the 49er FX class in Rio. She is the first Brazilian woman ever to take part in the Volvo Ocean Race, and in taking on the 45,000 nautical mile round-the-world challenge, she is making a massive step up – but it's one she's looking forward to.

"Stepping up from the 49er FX to the Volvo Ocean Race with team AkzoNobel is a very exciting opportunity to expand my sailing skills and my fitness level," Grae said. "My goal is to as quickly as possible get a good feel for the boat and understand the finesse required to produce the best performance."

"This is a big journey for me but I'm hoping to enjoy the experience and learn a lot from it. Most of all I want to prove that I belong on this team and I can't wait to start racing against other boats."

Team AkzoNobel is led by Simeon Tienpont and the Dutchman is delighted to add another huge sailing talent to his strong multinational crew.

"Martine is one of the world's most talented young sailors and has proven her ability to perform at the highest level with her Olympic gold medal winning performance," Tienpont said. "She is one of the few individuals who can successfully make the leap from small boat sailing into the professional arena of big boat racing in events like the Volvo Ocean Race."

"It's no surprise that she is such a complete talent given the amazing sailing family she grew up in, where she learned from a young age what it takes to compete at the top of this sport. Aside from her sailing ability, Martine also has a great personality – she's fiercely competitive and great fun to have on board."

Grael will take part in Leg Zero – a mandatory series of four preliminary races for the seven competing Volvo Ocean Race teams prior to the race start on October 22 in Alicante, Spain.



Two-time Volvo Ocean Race veteran, and first female Sydney-Hobart winner Liz Wardley is the first official member of Turn the Tide on Plastic.

Jen Edney/Volvo Ocean Race

Two-Time Race Veteran Liz Wardley Signs on to Turn the Tide on Plastic

Turn the Tide on Plastic skipper Dee Caffari has named her first crew member of the 2017-18 edition by signing up two-time Volvo Ocean Race veteran Liz Wardley.

The Australian, who first competed in the Race in 2001-02 onboard Amer Sports Too, and more recently was part of Team SCA's 2014-15 campaign, joins the team as Boat Captain.

Liz made her name winning numerous titles in the Hobie Cat 16 class, before becoming the first woman to win the Sydney-Hobart Race in 1999, having skippered a boat at the age of just 19 the previous year.

Wardley boasts more experience around the One Design Volvo Ocean 65's than anyone else on the planet having clocked up over 80,000 nautical miles over the last four years.

Since the end of the Team SCA campaign, she has been working as part of the Volvo Ocean Race Boatyard team in Lisbon, as the facility completed a comprehensive refit of the whole fleet.

"I'm absolutely delighted to join Turn the Tide on Plastic for the next edition of the Volvo Ocean Race," said Wardley. "I've made no secret of my desire to compete for a third time and to do so as part of what will be a fully mixed crew is incredibly exciting.

"I've spent a lot of time around the Volvo Ocean 65s since the end of the 2014-15 edition and I've learned a lot which I can't wait to put into practice during another race around the world."

The Turn the Tide on Plastic campaign, backed by the Mirpuri Foundation and the Ocean Family Foundation, will amplify the United Nations Environment's 'Clean Seas: Turn the Tide on Plastic' message throughout the Race.

Wardley, who was born and raised in Papua New Guinea, is a passionate ocean health campaigner and believes that this campaign can make a real difference to what is a growing issue.

"As someone who grew up around the ocean in some of the most remote parts of the planet, I have seen the heartbreaking impact of plastic pollution first hand," she continued.

"We need to do something about it – and I'm extremely proud about being part of this trailblazing campaign, backed by some passionate partners, which I really believe can make an incredible impact on a global scale."

Caffari, who has been trialling potential crew members in Lisbon over the past month as she aims to build a youth-orientated and mixed squad, added that Wardley's experience makes her a key part of the team.

"I know Liz well having sailed alongside her on Team SCA and she is one of the best in the business," she said. "She knows the Volvo Ocean 65 inside out having spent more time around these boats than any other sailor in the world – male or female – and that's experience you simply can't replicate."

Caffari and Wardley oversaw a trial crew which recently sailed the Turn the Tide on Plastic boat from Lisbon, Portugal to Gosport, UK where the full Volvo Ocean Race fleet is stationed ahead of the beginning of Leg Zero on Wednesday 2 August. Further members of the Turn the Tide on Plastic crew will be announced shortly.

The Turn the Tide on Plastic boat will amplify the Volvo Ocean Race's larger sustainability focus, and joins team AkzoNobel (Simeon Tienpont, Netherlands), Dongfeng Race Team (Charles Caudrelier, France), MAPFRE (Xabi Fernández, Spain), Vestas 11th Hour Racing (Charlie Enright, USA), Team Sun Hung Kai/Scallywag (David Witt, Australia) and Team Brunel (Bouwe Bekking, Netherlands) in the fleet for the 2017-18 edition.

Grael and Wardley join the ranks of at least seven other confirmed women competing in the 2017-2018 Volvo Ocean Race, including Dee Caffari, Hannah Diamond, Jena Mai Hansen, Sophie Ciszek, Marie Riou, Carolijn Brouwer, and Annemieke Bes.

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