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On a mission to make a difference

Published on October 23rd, 2017

Britain's Dee Caffari, after competing in the 2014-15 Volvo Ocean Race as a crew on the all-female Team SCA, now is skipper for the 2017-18 edition of Turn the Tide on Plastic, leading a mixed gender, youth-focused team with a strong sustainability message.

Caffari is the only female skipper amongst the seven teams and is leading the only campaign in the event's history to have an equal amount of men and women onboard.

"I'm hoping this is a watershed year in the Volvo Ocean Race where gender will be a thing of the past and sailors will be picked on their ability in teams in the future," said Caffari. "Gender isn't necessarily the issue; it's about the crew dynamics and performance."



Dee Caffari

Does Caffari's young, relatively inexperienced team have what it takes to compete with some of the best offshore sailors in the world? With seven under-30s in her final squad and the most nationalities out of any of the teams (nine) – she has put together one of the most interesting campaigns the race has ever seen.

“Ultimately you enter the Volvo Ocean Race to be as competitive as possible and I've got some very competitive sailors on board so we're looking for a good performance.”

Caffari's ambition of becoming a skipper in Volvo Ocean Race finally became a reality back in June this year. There was a time, post 2014-15 edition of the race, Caffari was desperate to be involved in a team in any way, shape or form.

Despite having extensive experience and the advantage of the mixed gender crew rule, the process of the teams recruiting crew was a slow one. As the months went by, the British Skipper became more and more convinced her time wouldn't come.

When the concept of a team representing the United Nations Environment's 'Clean Seas' campaign was initially discussed, one of the key issues was finding partners with the same core ambitions to back the campaign. This is where Principal Sustainability Partner, the Mirpuri Foundation came in.

By becoming Founding Partner of the team alongside the Ocean Family Foundation, these two companies allowed this progressive campaign to move from conception to reality. Joined together by the core ambition to 'Turn the Tide on Plastic', the Volvo Ocean Race campaign was born.

Alongside these partners, Sky has stepped up its Ocean Rescue campaign and also partnered with the team. As part of the campaign the team will use on-board data gathering equipment to measure water quality and composition, as well as micro-plastics in some of the world's remotest oceans.



"We are a team that wants to make a difference," says Caffari. "I believe we have created a campaign that will allow people to connect on a personal level to this project. Whether it is sustainability, gender equality or diversity and inclusion, our aim is to use the platform of this race to connect with people. Our message is a strong one. We may not start out as race favourites but we will grow and we will improve and we certainly won't give up."

An ex-teacher, Caffari has surprised people by opting for talented in-shore sailors such as Bleddyn Mon (GBR) from the America's Cup and Annalise Murphy (IRE), Olympic Laser Radial silver medalist.

"If you looked at the young sailors on my team and tried to count the offshore miles, it would look very poor on paper but make no mistake I have picked talented sailors who know how to make a boat go fast. My team is hungry, every leg will be a learning curve but it would be foolish to write us off too soon."



The first leg of the Volvo Ocean Race started on October 22 and extends 1450 nm from Alicante, Spain to Lisbon, Portugal via Porto Santo.

2017-18 Edition: Entered Teams - Skippers

- [Team AkzoNobel \(NED\)](#), Brad Jackson (NZL)
- [Dongfeng Race Team \(CHN\)](#), Charles Caudrelier (FRA)
- [MAPFRE \(ESP\)](#), Xabi Fernández (ESP)
- [Vestas 11th Hour Racing \(DEN/USA\)](#), Charlie Enright (USA)
- [Team Sun Hung Kai/Scallywag \(HKG\)](#), David Witt (AUS)
- [Turn the Tide on Plastic \(POR\)](#), Dee Caffari (GBR)
- [Team Brunel \(NED\)](#), Bouwe Bekking (NED)

Background: Racing the one design Volvo Ocean 65, the 2017-18 Volvo Ocean Race begins in Alicante, Spain on October 22 2017 with the final finish in The Hague, Netherlands on June 30 2018. In total, the 11-leg race will visit 12 cities in six continents: Alicante, Lisbon, Cape Town, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Auckland, Itajaí, Newport, Cardiff, Gothenburg, and The Hague. A maximum of eight teams will compete.

