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## Daring Anglesey yachtsman sets sail in round the world ocean race

Bleddyn Mon is aboard the yacht Turn the Tide on Plastic and is heading home to Wales



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By [Eryl Crump](#)  
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NEWS

Torn sails, huge seas, icebergs and freezing cold temperatures - at 45,000 miles, the Volvo Ocean Race is no luxury cruise.

But it is a journey that Anglesey yachtsman Bleddyn Mon has enjoyed every moment so far as a crew member of the Turn The Tide On Plastic yacht.

Bleddyn, who hails from Amlwch, has reached Brazil after setting off from Alicante, Spain last October, journeying across the great oceans with stopovers in Hong Kong, Cape Town and Auckland.



Bleddyn Mon on board Turn the Tide on Plastic (Image: Sam Greenfield/Volvo Ocean Race)

The race resumed last weekend and the yachts are sailing from Brazil to Newport - the one in Rhode Island, USA - and then sail to Cardiff arriving at the end of May.

His yacht is helping to spread the message about the damage caused by plastic in the oceans and is collecting data on microplastics as it voyages around the world.

Bleddyn said: "The Volvo Ocean Race is a huge test of ability and resilience, and it's been one of the most amazing experience of my life.

"As a Welshman, it's terrific that Cardiff is the UK stopover, and I'm so looking forward to catching up with family and friends when we reach Cardiff Bay in May."

He said he become part of the Turn The Tide On Plastic crew when skipper Dee Caffari approached him in 2016 after the Americas Cup in Bermuda.

"I was there competing with the Land Rover BAR team and she asked if I would be interested in joining her team for the 2017/18 Volvo Ocean Race.



**Turn the Tide on Plastic** (Image: Sam Greenfield/Volvo Ocean Race)

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"At the time I had obviously followed the Volvo in the past and with a few Volvo sailors in the BAR team it was on my radar, however I had never sailed offshore let alone raced offshore before.

"Dee invited me along to a trial sail out of Lisbon, two weeks after arriving back from Bermuda. It was only a three day trial, but it seemed to go well and less than a week later I was back out to Lisbon to sail the boat to Portsmouth to start preparation for the Volvo Ocean Race," he said.

Bleddyn added the Volvo Ocean Race is a very iconic and prestigious race within the sport of sailing.

"It's arguably the most competitive and challenging offshore race in the world and therefore attracts some of the best sailors and teams.

"I had followed previous editions of the Volvo and with sailors such as Xabi Fernandez and Andy McLean (both Volvo Ocean Race sailors) part of the BAR team, my interest in the race certainly grew.

"In addition, with the 35th Americas Cup coming to an end and nothing likely to happen in the coming months the opportunity to compete in the Volvo and learn new skills was one that I could not miss," said Bleddyn.



**Crew on board Turn the Tide on Plastic** (Image: Sam Greenfield/Volvo Ocean Race)



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Preparation for the race started last August with a series of races that all seven teams competed in.

“This was our first opportunity to line up against the opposition and see how we fared. It was also the first offshore race that I and many of our team had done.

“Cascais (Portugal) was then our base for three weeks where we did a good block of inshore and offshore training. Alongside this I was studying for my RYA Yacht Master qualification which was a requirement for all sailors competing in this edition of the race.

“This concluded with a practical exam in the Solent and was followed immediately by a Sea Survival course in Newcastle.

“When we arrived back in Portugal the boat was out of the water having its final re-fit prior to the race start from Alicante.

“The final practice we had prior was the prologue leg from Lisbon to Alicante. However, I was not on the boat for this, so I went back home to Anglesey to pack my bags ready for a lap of the planet,” he said.

The race, so far, has gone well for the 25-year-old.



**Bleddyn Mon** (Image: Jeremie Lecaudey/Volvo Ocean Race)

“Having not competed in this race or any similar races before, I prepared myself by expecting the worst. So far this has worked well.

“Each leg has been extremely tough for a variety of reasons; however, the racing is great and it’s also massively rewarding, particularly when you arrive at a stopover and look back at the challenges you’ve overcome as a team.

“One of the biggest highlights so far has been seeing us progress as a team from leg to leg. We pushed Brunel, Scallywag and AkzoNobel hard in the first and second legs. We showed our potential in the fourth leg from Melbourne to Hong Kong where we were challenging with the leading pack up to the half way point, and we led into Auckland with about 1500 miles to go.

“Other highlights have been the incredible conditions that I have experienced for the first time. 40kts plus of wind and 6/7m waves in the Southern Ocean. Contrasting conditions in the doldrums – flat calm and clear skies, then before you know it towering clouds forming with squally winds, thunder and lightning. Not to mention the wildlife – dolphins, sharks, whales and albatrosses,” he said.

The first yachts are expected to arrive in Cardiff on May 28 having made the 3,000 mile voyage across the Atlantic. The Cardiff stopover is the first UK visit in 12 years for a race that started life in 1973. The race restarts from Cardiff on June 10.

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