

All hands on deck

Yacht racing is gruelling and competitive, and managing time is the key factor that separates the winners from the less fortunate, writes **Peter Sabine**



The world's leading boat races are challenges that require preparation, skill, fortitude, technology and a bit of luck to determine who wins.

At the centre of this is time, as it dominates everything sailors do. Striving to be the fastest to finish races, planning around the weather, making immediate changes on deck, enduring tough conditions, surviving periods of brutal force that can end the race and leave people fighting for their lives make time management critical. In sailing, this process is central to some of the world's most famous races.

The Volvo Ocean Race is one of the world's ultimate challenges and packed with war stories aplenty. Spanning nine months, and combining an overall race and in-port series, time is an essential factor for sailors.

This year's edition started in Alicante, Spain last month, and will finish in Gothenburg, Sweden in June. Teams will need to manage their time well to cover the 11 ports and 38,739 nautical miles spread out across the globe. The inaugural edition of the Whitbread, as the race was previously known, was held in 1973, and saw

324 sailors take part. These adventurers were the first group to face 40-knot winds, 100-metre tall icebergs, severe cold and a series of other challenges. Throughout the race, managing time, and surviving long periods at sea, was central to completing the voyage.

From the first edition, where three sailors lost their lives, the race has secured legendary status. Folklore includes a sailor who was swept overboard, owing his life to a flock of albatross that gave away his location, to a student doctor swimming across the rough Atlantic to treat a seaman in another crew who had broken a leg. It is these legends that the competition creates and retains, forging legacies that strengthen in magnitude with the passing of time.

The challenge for the best and brightest, often surrounded by controversy, but never failing to inspire is the America's Cup. Big money and celebrity surrounds the competition, with the likes of Oracle founder Larry Ellison and British Olympic champion Ben Ainslie vying for glory in the next series. The cup's history has been marked by prestige, legal battles, advanced sailing technology and plenty of intrigue. At the heart of the race is a desire to have achievement etched into history in one of the most prestigious sporting events.

Indeed, the race has stood the test of time: Dating back to 1851, the America's Cup is a challenge that pits teams and, by proxy, nations

The Dongfeng competes in the Volvo Ocean Race which started in Alicante, Spain. Photo: Marc Bow

