

## History of the Whitbread

The Round-the-World Race is held every four years

The Volvo Ocean Race - previously known as the Whitbread Round-the-World Race - began in 1973 but was nearly sunk before it reached the start line.

There was difficulty finding a sponsor after the disastrous Golden Globe Race in 1967, in which eight boats entered but only one made it round the world.

However, the Royal Navy Sailing Association agreed to underwrite the costs of the first event, even if commercial sponsorship could not be found.

With the Navy on board, the race was suddenly a far more attractive proposition, and Whitbread agreed to become sponsors.

The world's greatest ocean race was born.

### 1973/74

The first-ever Whitbread Round-the-World Race was marred by the deaths of three competitors.

Seventeen boats started the race from Portsmouth harbour and appropriately the Royal Navy's Adventure won the first leg, to Cape Town, on corrected time.

Great Britain II, which was second to Sydney behind Pen Duick VI in the second leg, overcame the death of a crew member to win the third and fourth legs.



EF Language won the last Whitbread

After 144 days at sea, she sailed home to set a new around-the-world record, although on overall scoring Sayula II was victorious.

### 1977/78

Great Britain II was back for the next race, part of a 15-strong fleet.

Heath's Condor took the second leg, despite crew member Bill Abram being swept overboard - he was only saved when his position was marked by circling albatross.

Flyer, which had won the first leg, went on to take the race on corrected time.

## **1981/82**

The first leg saw Italian entry Vivnapoli arrive eight days late after it was boarded by an Angolan gunboat, which discovered South Africans on board and arrested them as spies.

Previous winner Flyer won the first two legs, although Ceramco NZ prevailed on corrected time.

The two boats continued their battle in the third leg and fourth legs.

Flyer prevailed to become the first boat to win twice, although not before getting stuck in mud in the Solent.



Tracy Edwards  
skipped the first all-  
female crew in 1990

## **1985/86**

This race started in September, a month later than its predecessors, and L'Esprit d'Equipe took the first leg on corrected time.

The smaller boats took a beating on the second leg, which was won by Atlantic Privateer.

Swiss yacht UBS Switzerland took the final two legs and won the race on elapsed time, but L'Esprit d'Equipe was the race winner on corrected time.

## **1989/90**

This race saw the first-ever women's crew compete aboard the Tracy Edwards-skipped Maiden.

It was also the first time six legs were staged.

Steinlager 2 won the first leg of a race which saw the death of two racers during the stopover.

A third was killed on the second leg, which was won on elapsed time by Maidean.

Steinlager 2 had a thrilling duel with fellow Kiwi maxi Fisher & Paykel NZ to win the third leg by just six minutes.

Steinlager won the final three legs and came home first after 128 days.

## 1993/94

The maxi NZ Endeavour took the first leg, with Intrum Justicia taking the second.

One of the highlights of the race was Dalton squeezing home on the fourth leg by just three minutes.

NZ Endeavour kept the lead and they went on to finish overall winner among the maxis after taking the final leg.

Tokio won the final leg among the W60s, but Yamaha finished third and claimed overall victory.



Endeavour competes in the 1993 race.

## 1997/98

The last time the race carried Whitbread's name saw the number of legs increased to nine.

EF Language set its stall out, winning two of the first three legs - and had built an unassailable lead by the end of the seventh leg.

Swedish Match recorded an average speed of 13 knots, the highest in the Whitbread's history, after an inspired move to sail offshore right at the start of the second leg.

Britain's Jez Fanstone - skipper of News Corp in 2001 - was aboard Lawrie Smith's Silk Cut when it set the monohull 24-hour record.

## Race guide to the ocean challenge



The Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race is one of the most gruelling challenges on the sporting calendar.

Competitors have to contend with towering seas, icebergs, boiling heat and cramped conditions during the nine months it takes to sail 32,000 miles around the globe.

And there is no release from the pressure of race conditions. The crew of up to 12 people have to grab sleep in four-hour snatches, huddled in between sailing and navigation equipment in the 60ft boats. To save weight they are also severely restricted in what they can take on board.

The competition began in 1973 and is staged every four years. Yacht design has improved so much that boats can reach speeds of around 24 knots although efforts to reduce weight occasionally lead to breakages.

This year 10 boats entered the race which left Southampton on September 21, bound for Cape Town.

The first leg covered 7,350 nautical miles and the fleet was expected to take about 30 days to complete the dash south though most took more than 32 days. Distances between ports can vary immensely as yachts take different routes in the search for the strong winds that will speed their progress.

For the first time this year the race rules have been altered to a points scoring system instead of the total time taken to circumnavigate the globe.

The idea is to flatten out margins between boats and allow a series of contests within the overall race. It will give the yachts finishing a long way behind the lead boat on any leg the opportunity to launch a realistic comeback in the next stage and keep the leaders on their toes.

America's Challenge dropped out of the race after finishing seventh on the first leg.

The fleet is expected back in Southampton around May 24, 1998, after stopovers in Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, the United States and France.

The crew get a brief respite between legs and a chance to make repairs to their craft.

Nine teams are left in the race and they are:-

- 1 EF Language
- 2 Merit Cup
- 3 Innovation Kvaerner
- 4 Silk Cut
- 5 Chessie Racing
- 6 Toshiba
- 7 Swedish Match
- 8 EF Education
- 9 BrunelSunergy