

One to watch

**BRITAIN'S OLYMPIC MEDAL-WINNING BEN AINSLIE
DISCUSSES SAILING IN HIS DUFFLE COAT, DRIFTING AROUND AN
ERUPTING VOLCANO AND SKIPPING FOR THE AMERICA'S CUP**



year. It was such an honour, as there's only one spot per nation for each class of boat at the Olympics. I was only 19 and I won a silver medal, which made me realise that this was my chance to turn my passion into my job.

You've gone on to win two Olympic gold medals. Why are you now dedicating three years to the America's Cup?

I dreamed of winning gold at the Olympics and sailing in the America's Cup, so this is my next challenge. I'm sailing for the New Zealand "B" boat, as Britain doesn't have a boat this year. I've gone from being by myself to skippering 16 Kiwis in a massive boat.

Tell us about your most memorable sailing trip.

Cracking along at 35 knots between Sydney and Hobart. It was such a wild ride. In total contrast to this, however, I spent six days drifting around an erupting volcano between Malta and Sicily on what should have been a two-day race, as there was no wind.

What do you think of Dame

Ellen MacArthur's achievements?

I'm in total awe of what she's done. I first met her when we were about 16 and she spent the whole evening talking about sailing around Britain in her new boat. She never paused for breath, but I admired her determination.

You've achieved much at a young age. Does it become hard to find new challenges?

Sailing is such a varied sport and there's always something new to attempt. From sailing around the world to competing in the 2012 London Olympics, I've got plenty to keep me occupied.

When did you first step onto a boat?

I come from a big sailing family, so we were always out on the water. My first memory, though, is sailing across the Irish Sea when I was just five years old.

...And sail on your own?

I was given my own boat for Christmas when I was nine and living in Cornwall. I was so excited that I headed out to sea wearing only my Wellington boots and a duffle coat.

What made you want to sail professionally?

I won the Youth World Championships in 1995 and was selected to go to the Olympics the following

**SAIL
AWAY:
BEN'S CV**

BEN AINSLIE, 30, was awarded an MBE when he was 24 and an OBE when he was 28. His first major success came at the age of 16, when he became the Laser Radial World Champion. Since then he has gone on to win British Yachtsman of the Year four times and was named International Federation World Sailor of the Year in 1998 and 2002. He won a gold medal at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 in a Laser dinghy and four years later he changed to the Finn boat class at the 2004 Athens Olympics and he won gold again. *Ainslie is skippering the "B" boat at the America's Cup for the Emirates Team New Zealand, which starts on 16 April in Valencia (www.americascup.com).*

