

EXPERTS' FORUM

Pro insight

How to... Be the best team player

Matt Gotrel won Olympic gold at Rio 2016 – not in sailing, but in rowing. Since returning to his childhood sport of sailing, he has twice campaigned with INEOS Britannia for the America's Cup and is also in the British SailGP team. Here he tells us how he has learnt to dig deep even when he's at the limit...

"Returning to sailing has been a steep learning curve; as I left my 49er campaign for rowing they had just about put foils on Moths! When I came back to grind on the F50 (for SailGP) we all knew the learning curve would be steep. It was a great time to be involved with the British team, everyone was really committed but there wasn't the expectation to be the finished article straight away.

"This America's Cup cycle feels very different. I know the team a lot better. The rules are slightly different this time, so you may see cyclors on board, as the power generation can come from anywhere. So that's a big difference – but the training mentality is still the same.

"I've always enjoyed being part of a team more than competing individually, I feel like I can always push myself more for my teammates rather than for self-gain. In rowing, the environment and culture is such that if you didn't do it, someone else would; you can't let that happen, you always have to be there for your team mates. Ultimately, I don't want to let people down. If I have a job to do, I want to do it to the best of my ability.

"If you can give an extra 2 per cent when it matters it's going to make the difference between nailing a manoeuvre and not nailing a manoeuvre – that kind of pressure is what drives me on. That ability to push past your limits is definitely something you can learn in training. There's the classic saying, 'train how



you race, race how you train', so I feed that into my day to day training.

"Bear in mind that your body can always do more than you think. Again, that's something I learned from rowing – that the limit you set in your mind is not the limit of what you can physically achieve. Getting there is down to the environment you create; the guys that you train with; pushing each other on and going to new levels each time, and it becomes normal, as painful as it can be!

"I'm often asked which sport is harder. With sailing there are so many variables to factor in. Rowing is physically exhausting, but in sailing there is so much else that goes on –

equipment, competitors, tactics – that mentally you have to be very sharp. You can do everything right but still lose a race.

"We talk a lot about 'controlling the controllables'. One of my key learnings coming back in to sailing has been to take ownership for myself in being able to do the best I can in my own area, and to do that 100 per cent before I worry about others and what else is going on.

"My biggest driver is to do the best I can in my job and not let anyone else down; don't give any excuses for anything to go wrong."

Follow Matt and the team via ineosbritannia.com

Man Overboard!

Do you sail as a couple? Have you thought of how you would cope with one of you going overboard? President of the Cruising Association, Derek Lumb, offers some expert advice...



I spent over 16 years as a lifeboat launching authority and probably authorised and monitored over 200 shouts. Most of them were fairly routine, but in among those were some where people were in grave and imminent danger, none more so than where someone was in the water.

Given that, I would always advise a Mayday from a short-handed yacht for a man overboard – you can always stand it down if you recover the person but time really is of the essence.

Now think about how things would go. If you have the usual setup with the VHF at the Nav Station and a speaker in the cockpit then you are going to have to abandon the deck at the time when keeping an eye on the casualty is



crucial, to put out the Mayday, which may take longer than you expect.

One such incident convinced me of the problem and I afterwards installed a 2 station VHF radio on my boat so that it can be used from the helm. Some people have a hand-held VHF nearby for just such an emergency but if that is your plan then please try it out – my experience is that feedback makes it unusable.

It is also useful for calling for berthing instructions during normal cruising.

The Cruising Association is the home of worldwide boating information for yacht cruising enthusiasts. Visit theca.org.uk