

ALUM PROFILE

Around the World in 280 Days

Ken Read on the Everest of sailing



Ken Read, aboard *il mostro* during the nine-month around-the-world Volvo Ocean Race, battled thirty-knot winds while sailing past Cape Horn.

BY THE TIME he completed the 2008–2009 Volvo Ocean Race in June, Ken Read, the skipper of the racing boat *il mostro*, had sailed 37,000 miles, crossed the equator four times, weathered temperatures from thirty-two to ninety degrees, and survived a broken rudder. The nine-month-long around-the-world race began on October 11, 2008, in Alicante, Spain, with eight teams in the mix. When it was over, Read's PUMA Ocean Racing team crossed the finish line in St. Petersburg, Russia, on June 27 in second place, behind Torben Grael's Ericsson 4 crew.

"We're all feeling relieved," says Read (MET'83), who lives in Newport, Rhode Island. "We're glad that we have accomplished our goals, but in a way also really sad. It's the end of an era."

Read sailed the race with a crew of sixteen — eleven on board and five ready to fly in at a moment's notice. "Our team was solid," he says, "even if everyone has had their moments. Having all these guys stuck in essentially a cave, soaking wet, in bitter cold and boiling hot conditions — heck yeah, there's going to be conflict."

The toughest leg of the race was the forty-two-day stretch of 12,300 nautical miles from Qingdao, China, to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Once the team passed Papua New Guinea and headed east, they were in the largest stretch of water on Earth, the Southern Ocean. By the end of the leg, the team

was rationing food and struggling with a lack of wind.

"You don't realize how daunting the Southern Ocean is until you're there," Read says. "There's Cape Horn. If you're going to write the script for it, it was this squaly, eerie, hazy day. The sun would break through and then it's pouring rain, blowing thirty knots."

Crossing the Atlantic brought its own challenges: halfway through, the boat's rudder broke, and the team nearly plowed into a whale while sailing through a fog bank. The waves had *il mostro* surfing to forty knots. "The whole corridor keeps you fighting," says Read, whose crew made it across in a week. "No one wants to give an inch."

His preparation for such nautical trials began at BU, under the sailing tutelage of coach Skip Whyte. As an undergraduate, Read was a three-time All-American and won the 1981–82 Morris Trophy, awarded to the nation's outstanding collegiate sailor. He was inducted into the BU Athletics Hall of Fame in 1990. Following graduation, he won a pair of J-24 World Championships, in 1985 and 1986, and in 1994 was named the Rolex Yachtsman of the Year.

"I grew up in a landlocked town, Seekonk, Massachusetts, with a father in the dairy business delivering milk in glass bottles," says Read. "Now I'm in some of the coolest sailing events on Earth. It's a pinch-me, dream-come-true kind of thing." KIMBERLY CORNUELLE