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Name

Sir Chay Blyth CBE BEM

Topics and Title

Motivational Speaker & Professional Yachtsman

Background History

Chay Blyth was born in Hawick, Scotland on 14 May 1940. When only 18 years old he joined the British Army's Parachute Regiment where he rose quickly through the ranks of the Third Battalion becoming Sergeant at the age of 21, the regiment's youngest ever platoon Sergeant at that time.

In 1966, Sergeant Chay Blyth, together with Captain John Ridgeway, rowed across the North Atlantic from Cape Cod to the Aran Islands in a 20ft dory. The journey was completed in 90 days and Chay was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM).

In 1971 aboard the 59ft ketch British Steel, Chay Blyth became the first person to sail non-stop around the world against the prevailing winds and currents. The journey was described by The Times newspaper in London as "The most outstanding passage ever made by one man alone". In recognition of his achievement, he was made a Commander of The British Empire (CBE) and was voted Yachtsman of the Year by the Yachting Journalists Association.

Areas of Expertise

Amongst his many notable achievements, Sir Chay Blyth is recognized as the first person to open the sport of yacht racing to a wider audience, giving people from all walks of life the opportunity to race around the world on equal terms. Not just on equal terms, but to participate in what most people consider to be "The World's Toughest Yacht Race".

Chay's inspirational idea was to build a fleet of identical one-design yachts, on which matched teams would sail the 'wrong way' around the world, to train Crew Volunteers, to attract a Title Sponsor together with individual Yacht Sponsors and to create a business environment which would benefit all involved.

The huge success of the 1992-93 British Steel Challenge, confounded the critics and led to the enormously successful BT Global Challenge and subsequently the Atlantic Rowing Race. Future events include the BT Global Challenge 2000-2001,

L'Atlantique Open 60s Challenge 2001, Ward Evans Atlantic Rowing Challenge 2001 and the New World Challenge 2002-2003.

Despite attempts from other organizations to copy the concept, they have not managed to capture all of the essential ingredients that make Chay's original formula unique.

Chay Blyth has established an impressive list of yacht racing successes and sailing endeavours including:

1971 - First person to sail single-handed, non-stop around the world against the prevailing winds and current.

1973-1974 Skipped the yacht Great Britain II in the Whitbread Round The World Yacht Race with a crew of Paratroopers. Won the Elapsed Time Prize for the fastest yacht overall.

1978 Won the Two-handed Round Britain race with Rob James in the yacht Great Britain IV.

1981 Won the Two-handed Transatlantic race with Rob James in the yacht Brittany Ferries GB, breaking the existing record.

1981-1982 Entered the Whitbread race again in the yacht United Friendly (formerly Great Britain II).

1982 Second overall in Round Britain Race, first in Class I on the yacht Brittany Ferries GB.

1984 With companion Eric Blunn, set out on the trimaran Beefeater II to break the record of The Flying Cloud for the fastest passage from New York to San Francisco. Capsized off Cape Horn and spent 19 hours in the water before being rescued.

1986 Co-skipper of the successful Blue Riband transatlantic attempt on Virgin Atlantic Challenger II.

1989 Chay Blyth launched the first Challenge Race, The British Steel Challenge, styled the toughest yacht race ever. The ethos of the event was to allow ordinary men and women to undertake The Challenge of a Lifetime, The Adventure of their Lives by competing in a high profile event. His intention was to break down 'barriers' to yachting for individuals and sponsoring companies.

1992-93 British Steel Challenge; ten identical yachts race around the world against the prevailing winds and currents

1996-97 BT Global Challenge; fourteen identical yachts race around the world against the prevailing winds and currents

1997 Atlantic Rowing Race, twenty-four teams row across the Atlantic from Los Gigantes, Tenerife to Port St. Charles, Barbados.

1997 Chay was knighted by Her Majesty The Queen for his services to sailing.