



### **British Sailing Team Blog: Nick Dempsey**

18 August 2011

#### **October 2011**

It's been a landmark month for the British sailing team as we were the first athletes to be named for Team GB for London 2012.

For the last two Games I've been in what I think is actually a bit of a bonus situation in that I haven't really had to worry about selection; both campaigns have always been about trying to win Olympic gold.

You have different goals in the years before the Games, like performing well at the Olympic venue. But ultimately it's all about peaking for the Games and being able to concentrate solely on that, and not having to hit qualification landmarks along the way can help. You can burn out if you always have to sail at the top of your abilities to get selected.

The day our selection was announced was really nice. All the sailors who were named spent the day in London doing loads of media interviews and although it was a long day the exposure the sport received was absolutely massive.

For me the scale of media attention felt a bit like when I got back from Athens 2004 after winning my bronze, and hopefully it's given us a taste of things to come for 2012.

I've never had to do a big press conference before, with us all sitting up on stage and people firing questions at you. It did become a bit like the Ben Ainslie Show, which we all expected it would be, but I'm always happy to let him answer all the questions because he is a right pro at it now!

You don't realise it at the time of your selection but the minute you become an Olympian you are in the situation where you, as a result, are seen as a role model and you have to take that responsibility seriously I think.

At the end of September I spent two days at an RYA Volvo Zone Championships, for the country's up-and-coming junior sailors.

It's only doing something like that you really appreciate how much influence you can have as an Olympic athlete and how much the kids look up to you. I remember being exactly the same when I was 12 and although I didn't have any one inspirational role model that stood out for me, I always loved meeting people who were at the top of their game.

To be able to lose yourself in their world for a couple of days is pretty cool. Nothing has changed since

I was a kid; they've got their whole lives ahead of them and can be whatever they want to be. Kids are kids; some are really quiet when they meet you, some are really polite, some are extra cheeky. It is brilliant fun being able to muck in with them all.

Even now there are still people I look up to as athletes. They may not be sailors but I really admire Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer for the success they have both achieved, and the manner in which they have achieved it. They are both incredibly talented, work insanely hard and are great to watch. But it is the sportsmanship they show all the time I really like.

I've been testing out Volvo's new sailing app this month. It has got loads of Olympic windsurfing and sailing information, videos and tips from people like me, Ben Ainslie, Paul Goodison, the 470 girls Saskia Clark and Hannah Mills, the women's Match Racing team and Paralympian Helena Lucas. There are also a few behind-the-scenes videos and you can watch and learn as I cook some superb steaks on a BBQ!

I love apps, I'm a bit of a geek in that way! I'm obsessed with my eBay app; I've always been a good eBay buyer but recently I've started selling too!

There are also a few apps that have become an important part of my training programme. I have weather and tide apps and Windguru for wind information.

There is also an app we have started using recently called Restwise, where first thing in the morning I enter information about how well I slept, my resting heart rate, any illness I may feel, the colour of my urine, mood level and willingness to train. My coaches can then log into the information and get an idea of how I'm feeling and plan our day around it before we even meet up. It just gives them a snapshot of where I am at and how hard I'm likely to be able to be pushed.

On the Volvo Sailing app there is a picture of me when I was 13 with my first ever sponsor, from the shop at our local sailing club, and it reminded me of the massive part that sponsorship has played in me being able to sustain my career to the level I have.

Sponsorship is the hardest thing to get, yet there is little science behind it. You can either forget about it, get out there train hard, do your best and hope that things look after themselves or you can spend hours sending thousands of letters to every single person with a nice car you see! Neither way is more proven as being more successful than the other.

But I've always been a big believer that good results stand you in good stead and when you win an Olympic medal that puts you up another level.

Shops are the best place to go if you're just starting out; they often help out with bits of kit. Then it's all about people you and your parents know. At that stage people aren't looking for any financial gain they just want to be involved. Don't shoot above your weight by writing to Coca Cola!

I'm in the middle of a really hard five weeks in the gym and am knackered! But it feels really good seeing your body's capacity to deal with fatigue and pain develop as you push yourself harder and harder.

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## August 2011

I've now had a few days to reflect on my performance and silver medal at the Olympic Test Event and I'm still as pleased with it now as I was when I crossed the finish line.

I sailed really well throughout the event and it was always going to come down to a few points between myself and Dorian van Rijsselberge as to who was going to get gold.

Having been neck and neck for the whole regatta, he edged ahead on the final race of the fleet racing,

which given the unbelievably gusty and random nature of the wind on the Nothe course, was always going to be an opportunity for one of us to put some points over the other. It wasn't going to be about boat speed, and it was going to be very difficult to sail a conservative race. In the end he managed to get a shift that saw him finish two places ahead of me in that race, giving me a seven-point gap to overcome in the medal race.

I executed my plan for the medal race really well but unfortunately the Greek sailor fell in on a tack, which meant Dorian moved up a place in the medal race and there wasn't the number of sailors I needed between he and I for me to win the gold.

However, it is another medal for me at the Olympic venue with less than a year to go before the Games.

Skandia Sail for Gold and the Test Event were my two priority events for this year and I've won a gold and silver at each so I've got to be pleased about that. But with the way that Dorian was sailing at the Test Event I know exactly what I have to do to keep improving and be the best when it counts next summer, and me and my coach Barrie are all over it.

The whole event was a big learning experience for everyone. Some of the race management was a little bit strange at times but I'd rather they used the Test Event to have tried these things out than wait until the actual Games.

In terms of Weymouth and Portland performing as an Olympic venue, there is not really an awful lot that could go wrong. As long as the sailors have someone to park their boats and the windsurfers have a tent for their boards we are happy!

I've got two weeks off now, spending time with the family on holiday in the West Country, which is lovely. I've not seen a lot of Sarah and Thomas in the past few weeks because we were in the locked down team camp before and during the event and obviously throughout the event you are completely focussing on the job at hand. After the windsurfing events finished we remained in the British team camp supporting the sailors who were still competing until everyone had completed their events.

But I'll be back in training towards the end of the month when everything will be about picking up what we learned about the potential 2012 racecourses and the gains I need to make between now and this time next year to give myself the best chance of Olympic gold.

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## July 2011

Last week I launched into a big, hard week of training after being laid low by illness for around 10 days.

I'd trained for a few days after Skandia Sail for Gold but then my glands came up and there is nothing you can do in that situation but have complete rest and try to get rid of it, which is THE most frustrating thing ever when all you want to do is be out on the water training!

We had a good week down at Weymouth and Portland last week, and had a massive day on Thursday with a really hard training session, followed by me, my coach Barrie (Edgington) and a mate doing a local bike race for the first time. It was flat out for an hour and at the end we all exploded! After a couple of weeks of doing next to nothing I suffered a bit.

All thoughts have now turned towards the Olympic Test Event at Weymouth and Portland in August. It's still another three-and-half weeks away and although you're never happy when your preparations are disrupted by things like illness, there is enough time for me to hopefully get myself fully back on the

ball. As long as I can hold a boom, and I'm in reasonable shape I know I can do well.

Winning Skandia Sail for Gold was really important because it was the first of the two events I want to do really well at this year and you always want to do well in the Olympic venue. The Test Event will be a bit different because there will be fewer sailors but in terms of what I expect from my competitors, Sail for Gold and training gives you a really good idea of who's sailing fast and who you need to keep an eye on. Everyone will be going for it though.

The Test Event will be a chance for the British sailors to be all together as a whole team in the build up to the event, which is good for me because as a dad of a two-year-old it means I can switch into a bubble where all I have to think about is performance and sailing.

Thomas was two a couple of weeks ago and we had a brilliant day at Peppa Pig World at Paulton's Park. Pingu is actually his favourite but Pingu is a really naughty penguin and Thomas tries to speak like Pingu, which probably isn't the ideal role model! Peppa Pig actually talks properly!

As a Team Volvo for Life sailor I also got to take part in my first ever J.P Morgan Asset Management Round the Island Race last month. I was really excited about getting the chance to do it and I loved it! It was a shame we didn't beat Goody (Paul Goodison) because we had him on toast at one point. He nailed the start, while we were too conservative, but we caught him up before we had a bit of a problem with our spinnaker. I was on the helm for the whole race, I can't really sail and I've never really done any big boat sailing but the basics are all the same as windsurfing. The wind's the same, the waves are the same, race tactics are the same, and anyone can steer a boat in a straight line!

Our big focus for this week is light wind stuff so it's going to be another tough week out on the water getting to know the venue better and better every day. You can never know everything that's going to happen, and the weather at Weymouth and Portland can do very funny things, but experiencing as much of it as possible as often as possible will become more and more critical as 2012 gets closer.

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## 12 April 2011

A bronze in Palma made it two medals in two regattas this year but I was so disappointed with the result as I felt I was sailing well enough to win the event and I didn't manage to execute the result I wanted.

I sailed really well throughout the regatta and was really pleased with my overall performance but the last two races were my undoing really, and the medal race was especially disappointing.

There was a six-point gap between me and the overnight leader Dorian Van Rijsselberge (NED) going into the medal race but I'd sailed well enough during the regatta to feel confident I could overcome that gap.

The biggest problem came because my two main rivals Dorian and Tom Ashley (NZL) transitioned to planing before I did. From the moment Dorian started planing he was gone and at that point you have to start recalculating and re-jiggling your priorities. If Tom wasn't already planing I had to try to stay with him but they had both smashed the lay line and I got punished for being too conservative. Sometimes in those situations you have to just really go for it and commit and it was so disappointing I didn't do that and see the regatta out.

I can take a lot of heart from my performance; it was the first time in a couple of years that I felt like my Olympic campaign was really on target and I felt incredibly confident in the sorts of situations I wouldn't have done a year ago. In many ways medium to light conditions have gone from being a weakness to a strength. It really did qualify my decision to train so much abroad over the winter, which was a bit of a relief. But at the end of the day, our sport is all about results and winning and I didn't manage to do that, which I was gutted about.

I'm not doing Hyeres and am focussing entirely now on Skandia Sail for Gold at the start of June. I'm going to be training bloody hard down at Weymouth between now and the regatta; this next three months is the biggest training block of the year starting in earnest next Monday (18 April). I arrived back from Palma on Saturday night (9 April) and it was lovely seeing Thomas and Sarah. He's always great when I come home, he's coming up two now and he's at the stage where everything he says and does is entertaining. It's fantastic to spend be back home with them again having spent so much time overseas this winter.

Since getting back I've done a photoshoot with Ed Wright (Skandia Team GBR World champion Finn sailor) for Esquire magazine in London, to promote Musto's forthcoming autumn/winter collection. I was also on Thomas-watching duties as Sarah presented a talk about girls' sailing opportunities to the sailors at the 2011 RYA Volvo Youth National Championships, which are going on at Hayling Island this week.

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21 March 2011

MY BUSY, and so far exotic, year has continued with some quality time in South America.

I've spent the last two weeks training in the Brazilian town of Buzios, which is east of Rio de Janeiro.

This was the second time I've spent a fortnight there this year, as there are no World Cups in February or March this year - an ideal time to get some quality time on the water. Some of my rivals have also based themselves in Brazil and we are getting solid preparation under our belts ahead of the main summer championships, which will be important events for the whole of Skandia Team GBR.

My priority was testing equipment and refining my techniques in the varied wind conditions that you get out there.

Being on the Tropic of Capricorn, Buzios is an ideal venue for warm weather training. Another favourite venue of mine has to be Martinique, a French Caribbean Island, the windsurfing there is really testing and the surf is amazing. It peels over the reef on the Tartane peninsula... perfect for a bit of cross training. I would go there again, maybe even on a surf holiday if I got the chance. I love surfing so being able to combine my two favourite activities in one trip is a dream set up!

When not training recently I've been picking out carpets with my boyfriend for our Tunbridge Wells home, now that we're coming to the end of a major renovation project. It's quite fun, actually. We have a new TV too and we're just putting the finishing touches to the place. It's taken up all of my boyfriend's time over the last few months so when I'm not away competing or training it's about trying to find quality time to spend together. Greg has also started getting into his rugby and is playing for Tunbridge Wells' London 1 South team, so I get down there when I can and watch him play. I'm his WAG, often with Molly, a small fluffy black terrier, in tow!

Once the UK waters have warmed up a touch I plan to get out on my new wave boards and sails from

Fanatic and North. Surprisingly enough I still love a good blast off the south coast in search of a few waves and having a laugh with my mates on the water, whether they are kiting, wavesailing, or pulling off mad tricks in front of sea-front strollers and café goers.

On a good forecast I'll call up my mates, we'll head down to whichever beach is working in my packed Kombi Van from VW Commercial Vehicles, pull the kit out the back, rig what's best for the conditions and head out for an action-packed day.

You can order your tickets now to watch the Olympic windsurfing and sailing down in the lively seaside town of Weymouth and Portland for next summer. The viewing will be a real one-off spectacle with races everyday over the two weeks being held on the "stadium style" race area. Big screens showing the on-water action, on-board GPS tracking of the competitors, with live commentary to entertain the crowds. The final medal race and victory ceremony of the windsurfing being on August 7, 2012, where you can witness me receiving my... gold medal ?

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### **11th January 2011**

#### **MIAMI**

After a lovely festive holiday it was time to give up the mince pies and get back on the board. We arrived in Miami a week ago. Having not sailed since Perth back in November, it's been tough (well, not that tough!) The sun's been shining and with a little wind, sailing this week has been fantastic. I'm training with a great bunch, Ivan from Spain and his coach Alex have been good to me. My coach, Barrie, doesn't arrive for another week, so I'll be on their program until he arrives. It's nice to have someone else running the sessions for a change, new ideas and mixing it up a little.

Cycling every morning has been wicked, there must have been 400 cyclists out on Key Biscayne yesterday morning, loving riding early morning in the perfect temperature, seems a million miles away from home in December!

We seem to have landed on our feet this month, we have a glamour pad with the 7 of us sharing, Goody, Sas, Joe, Peggy, Sarah, myself and, of course, little TF. Sometimes training and travelling can be a real drag but not this time. Life in Miami is very, very nice! Two more weeks of training then it's time for the first event of the season, the Miami OCR starting on the 23rd Jan.

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### **28th November 2010**

After an end of season break it was time to get back into training and what better way, than to head to Perth, Australia the venue of the 2011 Worlds. It was to be a family affair with Sarah, Thomas and Peggy (our nanny). Pretty nervous about the flight but rather surprised about Tommy being a little angel and sleeping almost the whole way, nice!

The sailing, I can honestly say I am more excited about this winters training program than ever before. For the first time in my life I will be training within a different training group. My new training partners are Brazil's Ricardo Santos, Portugal's Joao Rodrigues and Spain's Ivan Pastor. These 3 guys are good friends of mine, all of whom sailing at the front of the fleet. Perth was our first training camp together. I learnt more in those 3 weeks than I have for years. Sailing with such good sailors really pushes every session to the max and with such talent within our group there is always one of us pushing the limits of what's possible, making the four of us better.

I'd been told to expect 20 knots every day from the Freo Doctor and for the first two weeks I wasn't disappointed. We trained hard together, enjoying the collaboration and pushed each other hard until someone broke, it's not usually me but on this occasion I was knackered, pushed to the limit by my

training partners is something I've been missing for years. By the time the event arrived we were all pretty tired but it had been worth it. As usual the regatta stopped and regular weather conditions we were getting use to but did provide us with some rare conditions which for the purpose of learning about the venue were perfect. I was in Perth to research the venue so I was racing with the mindset of learning and taking risks so the results weren't great but I really feel positive about how the trip went.

I now have 5 weeks at home to get back into the gym and work on the fitness. We recently moved house so I'm sure Sarah will have the whip out on the DIY projects. A balance of gym, painting and looking after little Tommy will keep me pretty busy until the first trip of 2011, Miami on the 3rd January.

2011 will be a big year and I am more focused than ever, I'm loving my training and enjoying the challenge of balancing family life with a pretty hectic program.