



MAKING WAVES: Singapore will host one leg of the 2008-09 Volvo Ocean Race which was won last year by ABN Amro One.

An ocean race to attract superstars and tourism receipts

TAN YO-HINN
yohinn@mediacorp.com.sg

YESTERDAY, organisers of the Singapore leg of the 2008-09 Volvo Ocean Race revealed they were in the hunt for superstars like golf icon Tiger Woods to add to the glitz and glamour of the event.

The Singapore leg of the race will dock at One° 15 Marina Club at Sentosa Cove in January 2009 and club chairman, Arthur Tay, said yesterday: "We're trying to attract megastars to visit (the One° 15 Marina Club) as part of the Volvo Ocean Race. Many of them own super yachts and we plan to invite them here."

The organisers and promoters of the Singapore leg of the race are ONE15 Singapore Ocean Race Pte Ltd, which signed an agreement with Volvo Event Management UK (Vemuk) yesterday.

"Singapore is a natural choice to host a stopover for the Volvo Ocean Race," said Jeremy Troughton, the race's planning and operations director.

"This is not only due to its position as a business hub in South-east Asia, but also its growing reputation as a venue attracting major sporting events to the region, such as Formula 1."

Formerly known as the Whitbread Round the World Race, the Volvo Ocean Race features yachts crewed by professional yachtsmen and women who sail over 39,000 nautical miles over the world's most treacherous oceans for a period

of 10 months.

The 2008-2009 race – the 10th edition – will start in the Spanish port of Alicante on Oct 4, 2008, and ends in the Russian port of St Petersburg on July 4, 2009.

Up to nine teams are expected to feature.

Six teams – two from the Ericsson Racing Team, Puma (1), Spain's Alicante (2) and one from Russia – have been confirmed.

Based on past races the event is expected to attract 300,000 international visitors.

The organisation cost is estimated at \$10 million and part of it will go to the construction of a Race Village built on a 3,000sq/m site on One° 15 Marina's premises.

The race generated about 61 million euros (\$122 million) for the Spanish region of Galicia, whose twin ports of Vigo and Sanxenxo co-hosted a leg of the 2005-2006 race.

Minister of State (Trade and Industry) S Iswaran is confident the event will have a similar effect here.

"These efforts will take us closer to our tourism vision of 17 million visitor arrivals and \$30 billion in tourism receipts by 2015," said Iswaran.

"This year, we are looking to cross a historical 10 million mark for visitor arrivals in Singapore, and are on track so far with 7.6 million visitors for the period January to September."

Visit www.volvooceanrace.org for more details

Parent concerned over Olympic sailor's treatment

Last week, Asian Games gold medalist Maximilian Soh dropped out of Project 0812, the country's programme to give elite athletes all the help required in their bid to become medallists at the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games. The 19-year-old sailor cited differences with SingaporeSailing for his decision. SingaporeSailing president Low Teo Ping countered by saying that athletes in the programme needed the right commitment and dedication. In this letter, Soh's mother defends her son's decision. SingaporeSailing declined to respond to her letter.

Letter from **HELEN CHOE**

I REFER to the article "Maximilian takes wind out of Project 0812 sails" (TODAY, Nov 14).

After the claims by SingaporeSailing president Low Teo Ping, as a concerned parent I feel that it is only right that I expound the truth behind Maximilian's resignation from Project 0812.

Maximilian's withdrawal was not because of an inability to take hardship and stringent training schedules but rather the environment he was subjected to and the way he was managed, which caused unhappiness and loss of faith, which ultimately led to his withdrawal so close to the Olympics in 2008.

Maximilian had attained a world ranking of 79 out of 810 sailors in the Olympic Laser Class at the age of only 19 as of Oct 2007 (refer to www.isaf.com), even years before a sailor reaches his peak, which puts him in the top 10 per cent in the world.

Prior to Maximilian's gold wins in the SEA and Asian Games my husband and I had actually, at our own expense, sent Maximilian overseas on his own for over a year, enabling him to train with world-class sailors and Olympic medallists and also to accelerate his studies so as to allow more training time.

It was only through his sheer determination, hard work, discipline, attitude, adaptability and natural talent that he is where he is. It shows that he has no problems adapting to tough training and conditions.

In the course of his career of representing Singapore and displaying our flag with pride and joy internationally, Maximilian was promised treatment and rewards in accordance with his performance and the time and effort spent training under their programmes.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SINGAPORESAILING

However, after delivering, SingaporeSailing consistently reneged on their word and failed to deliver as promised, citing his youthfulness in comparison to more senior sailors and they accorded him treatment on a lower level. Hence, it resulted in a loss of faith and trust in the organisation from us as parents and from Maximilian himself. In the face of such unfair treatment, I would like to ask whether it is right to accord sailors status and preference according to their seniority rather than performance levels?

Furthermore, he was constantly subjected to belittling and disparaging remarks and treatment regarding his age and youthfulness by SingaporeSailing in the course of their programmes, which resulted in him falling into a severe bout of depression after his last overseas stint with them.

As a parent, would you like to see your child in such a state even as you support and encourage him to strive for his goals and dreams? Would it even be right to subject him to such treatment?

I would also like to ask how then could an "immature" sailor have performed and produced such remarkable results in the global competitive scene and the recent Asian Games against older and more ex-

perienced competitors who have been dominating the field?

It has always been Maximilian's ultimate dream to sail for Singapore in the Olympics. His passion and love for sailing and its advancement within Singapore was never in doubt to us as, even now, he still wishes to contribute locally to the sport and be in touch with it by coaching.

To us as parents, SingaporeSailing has failed in looking out for the welfare of our child while I have been constantly showing him my full support. There has been a breakdown in communication between us and they have failed to consistently keep me informed as to his mental and physical well-being. To me, all these show a failure in the organisation and its objectives, further eroding our trust and confidence in the organisation.

I would like to appeal to the relevant authorities, ministries and the people to not let our young and talented athletes go to waste due to a lack of support and proper management. Many leave before they attain their peak due to the alienation they encounter. If we can keep and nurture them to the top rather than push them down to the bottom, Singapore could well become a global name in sports in the future.

SPORTONTV

TODAY

7.25am	Cricket	Australia v Sri Lanka, Ch110
8.30am	NFL	Denver v Tennessee, Ch23
10am	Basketball	Maui Invitational: Princeton v Duke, Ch23
12.30pm	Basketball	Maui Invitational: Arizona State v Illinois, Ch23

TOMORROW

8am	Basketball	Maui Invitational: Semi-finals, Ch23
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SPORTONRADIO

6.35am – 11.35pm	SportsZone Minutes Weekdays: hourly sports updates on 938live
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