

**PRESS RELEASE: Thursday 16 March**  
**Blackpool Skipper to Lead Team of Amateur Sailors in World's Largest Ocean Race**

Lance Shepherd, 53, from Blackpool, Lancashire, is set to realise a lifetime dream after being selected as one of twelve professional Skippers who will each lead a team in the Clipper 2017-18 Round the World Yacht Race, the largest ocean race on the planet, when it sets sail in August.

Lance, a former Royal Marine who began his sailing at the age of 14 with his local Scout group, has followed the Clipper Race ever since it began over twenty years ago.

After passing a series of intense interviews and trials as part of the selection, Lance said: "The challenge of taking a group of novice sailors, from all walks of life, out of their comfort zones and turning them into a successful round the world ocean racing team will be the highlight of my life, not just my career. It is a privilege to have been selected."

After eleven years in the Royal Marines, Lance began working as a freelance Skipper and has since gained extensive experience in ocean crossings, yacht racing, deliveries, team building, leadership and teaching of the RYA sailing syllabus.

With twelve teams and approximately 700 participants, the biennially held Clipper Race is the world's largest ocean race. 40,000 nautical miles in length, it challenges individuals to go further, dig deeper and push themselves harder as they pit their wits, skills and courage against the world's toughest oceans, with no previous experience required. Only the Skipper on board each team is professional.

"I believe a team is made by the complete engagement of every member which is achieved through building mutual respect, encouragement and collaboration," adds Lance. "I have a very high standard of safe seamanship and will promote a safe culture of continuous improvement for the whole team as they take on one of the toughest challenges in the world."

"Each ocean we cross will be challenging with its own set of characteristics but. I am really looking forward to crossing the Southern Ocean."

The race will be exciting, uncomfortable, relentless, exhilarating and at times, frustrating. Each of the twelve Clipper Race teams will need to display extraordinary amounts of focus, determination and stamina as they set out on their circumnavigation before returning as heroes.

The Clipper Race was the brainchild of Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, the first person to sail solo non-stop around the world in 1968-69. This momentous biennial event has a deep passion for challenge and life changing adventure at its core. Since the first Clipper Race in 1996, almost 5,000 people have been turned into competent ocean racers.

Sir Robin said: "The role of Clipper Race Skipper is one of the toughest, but most rewarding jobs that exists in sailing. Not only do you have to be a highly capable sailor to be able to complete the relentless challenge of circumnavigation, you also have to be an excellent instructor and leader.

"I wish Lance and his team the best in their Clipper 2017-18 Race campaign."

Lance is now working full-time at the Clipper Race HQ in Gosport, where he and the eleven other Skippers are leading the intensive crew training courses. The next major event in the race preparations is Crew Allocation, at Portsmouth Guildhall, May 20 where all Skippers and crew will be assigned to their teams for the first time.

Starting from the UK this August, the Clipper 2017-18 Race route will see the teams first race across the Atlantic to South America; the South Atlantic to Cape Town, South Africa; across the Southern Ocean's Roaring Forties to Western Australia; around to East Australia taking in the famous Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race en route; back into the Northern Hemisphere to Qingdao, China via Sanya; across the mighty North Pacific to West Coast USA; to New York via the famous Panama Canal; and then a final Atlantic crossing before arriving back to the UK as ocean racing heroes.

## **ENDS**

To download high-res images and videos of the skippers, please register for free, immediate access to our media portal at <http://mediaportal.clipperroundtheworld.com/auth/login>

For further information, imagery and interview requests please contact:

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### **About The Clipper Round the World Yacht Race**

The Clipper Round the World Yacht Race is one without equal; a powerful blend of fiercely intense competition and stirring human endeavour

The Clipper Race was established in 1996 by Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, the first person to sail solo non-stop around the world in 1968-69. His aim was to allow anyone, regardless of previous sailing experience, the chance to embrace the thrill of ocean racing; it is the only event of its kind for amateur sailors. Around 40 per cent of crew are novices and have never sailed before starting a comprehensive training programme ahead of their adventure.

This unique challenge brings together everyone from chief executives to taxi drivers, nurses and firefighters, farmers, airline pilots and students, from age 18 upwards, to take on Mother Nature's toughest conditions. There is no upper age limit, the oldest competitor to date is 74.

Whether they choose to take on the whole circumnavigation or compete in one or more of eight individual legs, all our crew achieve something remarkable as they conquer some of the world's most challenging oceans.

The overall route is split into a series of global races and a maximum 12 points going to first place ascending to 1 point for twelfth place. The team with the highest cumulative points at the end of the final race wins the series, and the Clipper Race trophy. For more information visit [www.clipperroundtheworld.com](http://www.clipperroundtheworld.com).