

# Sport



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## Best of British preparing for pursuit of the ultimate prize

**Ben Ainslie**  
Captain's log



I am pretty humbled to have been asked to take on the role of skipper and helmsman for TeamOrigin, Britain's entry for the 33rd America's Cup in 2009. This will be the 21st time that a British team has competed for the cup, but this really is different from previous campaigns. All the parts needed to make this a success are present and strong.

In the past, British challenges have had a great boat or a great sailing team or the correct financial resources, but never all together. On top of that, competing in the America's Cup has always been a big logistical effort and British preparations have been hampered because the competition has happened a long way from home, certainly in the early days.

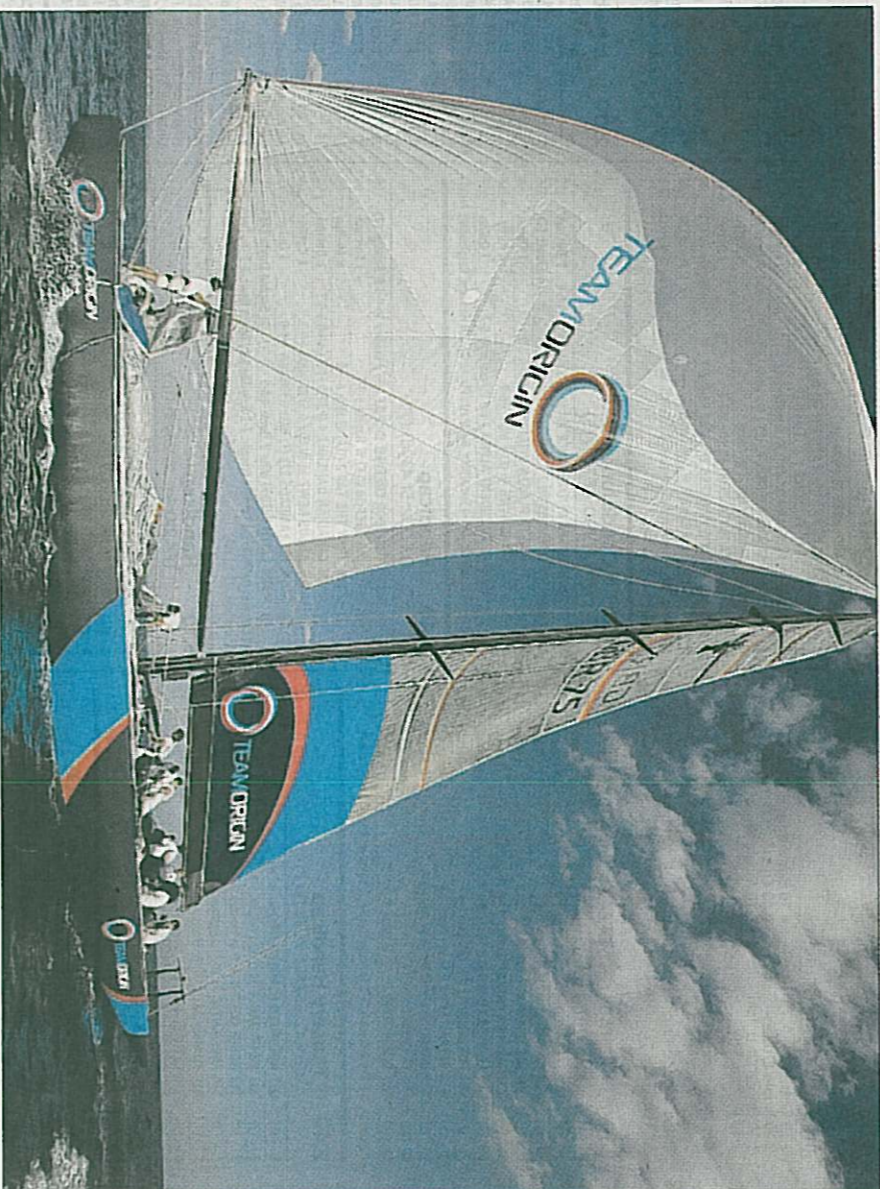
All those things are different this time. Like this year's contest, won by Alinghi, the next America's Cup will be in Europe and we will be moving the team to Valencia in Spain over the coming months. We have the financial, material, intellectual and human resources that no British challenger has had before, and they are already applying themselves to the campaign. We presented the team at the

Southampton Boat Show and then went sailing in our boat, GBR75, which was Alinghi's race boat in 2006. It was interesting to sail another team's boat, having been at the helm of the two Team New Zealand boats for the past couple of years. They are not the same and GBR75 has some interesting design aspects.

We have another year in this class of boat and then next year we will sail the new 90ft boat that will be used for the first time in the next America's Cup. A new class that the whole world will discover at the same time is an exciting prospect and gives our newly formed team a massive boost. We will be starting the design, build and sailing process for this new class at the same time as every other team. Unlike in previous events, no one will have two or three cup cycles' advantage over TeamOrigin. We are a lot closer to a level playing field.

The new class of boat will be more dynamic and exciting than the existing class. The length will increase from about 80ft to 90ft and the power of the boats will increase significantly through a deeper keel. These boats will be fun to sail and should make for a great spectacle.

With the new design, we cannot rely solely on the designers to come up with a rocket ship. Much like in Formula One, our designers, led by Andy Cloughton and Juan Kouyoumdjian, will need constant



**Mast from the past: TeamOrigin put Alinghi's former boat through its paces on the Solent during a training session**

support' and feedback from the sailing team on how the boat feels and where improvements can be made. The sailing team will have to race the boat, so we will have to take some ownership of the development process.

On a personal level, I am excited that I am going to be on the same boat as Iain Percy. He steered the +39 Challenge in this year's America's Cup. We have known each other since we were children and I have a huge amount of respect for Iain as a person and as a sailor. On TeamOrigin I am the skipper and the helmsman and he will be the tactician. The relationship between these two roles is crucial. Andrew "Bart" Simpson, Iain's Olympic Star partner, is also part of the sailing crew of TeamOrigin.

My Olympic firm programme is a big part of my life right now and Iain's Olympic programme with "Bart" is similar. There is a Great Britain Olympic sailing team announcement today, so we will learn more about our futures then.

The question is, can the Olympics and the America's Cup fit together? From a practical point of view there is a light competition programme in 2008 for the America's Cup and nothing in Beijing. The Olympic approach and the discipline required is useful to any sailing programme, especially the constant development of sailing reflexes from racing small boats at the highest level.

Olympic sailing is positive for TeamOrigin. Our successes at the Games are one reason why we have

the opportunity to take on the challenge. The team also has depth, so there are people who can sail in the practice sessions that will take place if we are not around.

When I look across at the people Mike Sanderson has put together with Keith Mills's and my input, I could not think of a team I would rather go into battle with. When Mike and Keith started planning this project, they drew up a dream team of people for every key post on the boat, in the design office, in the workshops and the back offices. With few exceptions, we have our first

choice of people for all these tasks. So although TeamOrigin is brand new as far as America's Cup teams are concerned, we have the ability, experience and the motivation to do whatever it takes to win.