Ship Report Transcript
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By Joanne Rideout

It's time for the Ship Report the show about all things maritime. I'm Joanne Rideout. It's Thursday, May 2nd, 2024.

Well, today I want to celebrate something nautical and something that I just think is really great. And it has to do with an ocean around the world sailing race that was just won by a boat whose crew is all women. It's the first time this has happened ever.

And also in this same race, the first boat across the finish line in the race was captained by a woman whose dad had sailed the race in that same boat in prior years. The race I'm talking about is called the Ocean Globe Race, and it just finished last month.

So let me explain this a little bit, since it already might sound a little confusing. Isn't the first one to cross the finish line in a race the winner? Well, not always. So let's talk about it.

You may have heard me talking last year about a solo, non-stop round the world sailing race called the Golden Globe race, which last April was won for the first time by a woman, Kirsten Neuschafer. She was the first woman to win a round the world solo sailing race and the only woman competing in the Golden Globe. That was a race in which all entrants had to race on production boats. So no custom designs, 36 feet long and carrying only equipment that was available during the 1970s and eighties.

So it was considered a retro race and "sailing like it's 1973" was the slogan. While each boat had high tech emergency gear on board, it could only be used in a serious emergency. And during the race, sailors had to navigate using a compass, sextant and paper charts. Sailors sailed alone in the Golden Globe and didn't leave their boats or go into port, or they'd forfeit their right to win.

Now, a year later, we have the Ocean Globe race organized by the same group, McIntyre Adventure, which was similarly a retro race in terms of equipment. But this race featured larger, fully crewed boats, yachts from 45 to 74 feet long.

Here's a description of the Ocean Globe race from their website: "The Ocean Globe is a fully crewed retro race in the spirit of the 1973 Whitbread Round the World Race. It marks the 50th anniversary of the original event named after its initiating sponsor, British Brewing Company Whitbread. The Whitbread Round the World Race is a yacht race held every three or four years since 1973. The original course was designed to follow the route of the Clipper ships, which had carried cargo around the world during the 19th century."

So the clipper ship route was like this: you leave Europe. In this case, Southampton, England, sail south and then turn east around the bottom of the globe below the bottom of Africa. Then boats sailed east and south of Australia and New Zealand, and then across the Pacific to Cape Horn and then north up the Atlantic, back to Southampton.

So this is an eight month adventure around the world for ordinary sailors on normal yachts. These people are racing ocean going production yachts designed before 1988.

"No computers, no satellites, no GPS, and no high tech materials. Team spirit and raw determination alone in the great traditions of ocean racing are allowed on this truly human endeavor." So that's from the Ocean Globe website.

Now, this race in particular is billed as a race for ordinary sailors who may not be able to afford the heavy price tag that goes along with competitive professional ocean racing.

With the Ocean Globe Race, crews of at least seven or eight people but usually more, can chip in to buy a yacht. And then when the yacht is sold at the end of the race, they get their investment back. And the low tech rules mean the whole enterprise is just less expensive. So a more affordable way to compete in a round the world race. And it allows people to go who might never be able to do this kind of adventure.

At any rate, in the mix on the Ocean Globe Race, this time around was the Boat Maiden, the only all female crew. And to make a very long, months long story short, she won.

This is also from the OCR website: "Maiden has won the MacIntyre Ocean Globe race, taking first in AIRC Handicap rankings against a 14 strong fleet of very experienced and committed boats and sailors. (So 14 other boats they competed against.) And they have now been written into the history books as the first ever all woman crew to win an around the world yacht race."

Here's a quote from skipper of the Maiden, a woman named Heather Thomas. "It's very exciting to be the first all female crew to win an around the world race. It's a historic moment. The girls have worked really hard for it and we're really proud of our achievement. We have the best crew and the best boat. So what can I say?"

So this yacht and her young, all female crew from around the world crossed the finish line seven months away from home, sailing over 28,500 nautical miles and 154 days at sea.

Now, this is also extraordinary in that this boat maiden was also in the Golden Globe race 35 years ago with another all female crew captained by a woman named Tracy Edwards, who was an advisor to the current maiden crew. Maiden competed in the 1989/90 Whitbread Race. So a historic boat, a historic effort. And this time around they won.

But to get back to what I talked about in the beginning, about the first person across the finish line is not necessarily the boat that won. Maiden was not the first boat across the Southhampton, England, finish line in the race.

And on the boat that did finish first, the captain was also a woman leading a male and female crew, and that was the French boat Pen Duick VI skippered by a woman named Marie Taberly.

And she has taken what's called provisional line honors in the final leg of the race. Now, line honors means first crossing the finish line. so that's a special honor in the race, even if you didn't win it overall.

The boat, the Pen Duick VI, is 73 feet long and was also sailed by her father, Eric Taberly, in the 1973 Whitbread Race. So a lot of history being made here with boats and people.

But how could the boat getting to the finish line first not be the winner? Well, that's because the race is evaluated against numerous criteria across four separate legs with stops in between, including special

circumstances that can either penalize or reward sailors for time accrued or lost, and rules that have consequences if broken. Penalties include needing to stop for repairs or adding gear to the boat after the start that wasn't there originally, not making deadlines for certain legs of the race and other criteria that, if not met, result in penalties.

So in this race, Maiden won even though she was not first across the finish line. And this is pretty normal for yacht races. In fact, in the Golden Globe race. Kirsten Neuschafer also won, even though she also was not the first to cross the finish line. But she did an extraordinary thing during that solo race that cost her time. She backtracked an entire day to rescue a fellow racing sailor whose boat had abruptly sunk. So she sailed like mad to get to him and had to backtrack to do it. And then rescued him from his life raft and delivered him to a passing cargo ship so he could get safe passage home.

Neuschafer was credited with the time she spent in that rescue and ended up coming across the finish line second, but winning overall.

So hats off and a big hooray for the crew of Maiden. The first all women crew to win around the world sailing race, and also to Marie Taberly, who honored her dad by sailing the same boat that he sailed in in the Ocean Globe race, and coming in first.

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