



# Nation's 'sailing capital' fetes clipper crews

BY ZHAO RUIXUE

**QINGDAO:** Hard work by clipper crews battling treacherous waves and extreme temperature changes for 20 days from Singapore to Qingdao was rewarded at a ceremony held by the Qingdao municipal government on Feb 24.

Brendan Hall and his crew on the race-leading *Spirit of Australia* accepted awards from Huang Sheng, vice-governor of Shandong province and William Ward, Clipper-Ventures CEO.

Hall and his 16-strong team sailed the yacht first to the finish line at Qingdao, moving them into the overall lead in the Clipper 2009-10 Round the World Race.

"This remarkable feat allows Qingdao citizens to experience the splendor and charm of this prestigious world sailing event," Xia Geng, mayor of Qingdao said at the award ceremony.

*Team Finland* was in second place over the first four legs of the race, but was last to Qing-

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XIA GENG  
Mayor of Qingdao

dao after losing part of its rig off the coast of Taiwan.

The Singapore-Qingdao leg from Feb 2 to 22 had the same tough conditions and headwinds for which it has long been notorious.

"I don't do the cold at all well and there were times over the last few days when I couldn't uncurl my fingers from the helm," said a crewmember named Michael from the *Spirit of Australia*.

He was echoed by Chris Stanmore-Major, the skipper of the *Qingdao*. "Singapore to Qingdao is the most difficult - we

encountered huge seas, cold weather and strong winds."

The Clipper Round the World race takes 10 months and covers 35,000 miles. The fleet of 10 boats set off from Humber on the northeast coast of England on Sept 13, 2009. After racing over the world's major oceans and visiting more than 10 ports on six continents, the fleet will return to Humber in July this year.

Site of the 2008 Olympic sailing competition, Qingdao has now welcomed the race three times.

"The number of Chinese citizens crewing in our race is increasing, said Clipper Chairman Robin Knox-Johnston. "Clipper has formed very strong relationships with Qingdao, the capital of sailing in China."

#### Ceremony for each boat

The city has arranged a series of activities for the Clipper's stay from February 20 to March 2, notably a welcoming ceremony for each of the nine boats still in the race.

"We are so thankful for

the people's welcome and the great efforts made by them," said Kirsty Whyte from *Spirit of Australia*. "The people of Qingdao are so friendly - we are impressed by their support and their presents."

Though it arrived two days after *Spirit of Australia*, sailors on the *Edinburgh Inspiring Capital* enjoyed the same wel-

come ceremony with throbbing drumbeats and lion dances.

"What a reception, unbelievable," said crewmember Simon Lemon. "We thought we had missed out on the festivities and to have that in our honor was amazing. It's my first time in China and already I'm impressed with the friendliness of everyone."

Another highlight was a ceremony when national flags and boat-related paraphernalia were given to Qingdao as presents.

During their stay, sailors can enjoy folk art exhibitions, animation shows and also taste local food such as *tanghulu*, the famed candy-coated haw fruit on a stick.

For Chinese traditional Lantern Festival on Feb 28, 76 crewmembers from around the world will be hosted by volunteer families to experience Chinese traditions and distinctive folk culture.

The fleet is scheduled to set sail from Qingdao on March 2.



Victorious Australian competitors are honored by Qingdao Mayor Xia Geng.

Photos by Ju Chuanjiang and Dai Yan



Crewmembers are celebrated after their grueling 20-day sail from Singapore.

## Qingdao sails home to glory

BY WANG QIAN

**QINGDAO:** At 6:06 pm on February 20, the yacht *Qingdao* crossed the finish line in its homeport to claim third place in the Singapore to Qingdao leg of the latest Clipper Round the World Race.

It was the best-ever finish for the dragon-painted yacht in its homeport since first joining the annual race in 2005.

At 10 am on the following day thousands of excited locals from all walks of life gathered at the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center to welcome the heroes home.

The first gift every sailor received was a mug of Tsingtao beer.

Skipper Chris Stanmore-Major, a 37-year-old Briton, told celebrants "the leg from Singapore to Qingdao is the most difficult part where we are at the mercy of complex weather and big waves."

"I am very proud that we arrived in our homeport today with the best result to date."

Sailing from warm tropical regions to the severe cold of northern China, sailors face a many challenges.

The *Qingdao*, the first boat named after a Chinese city in the clipper race, has now participated in the grueling event three times.

#### CLIPPER ROUND THE WORLD RACE (SEPT 2009 - JULY 2010)

- Leg 1 UK to Brazil
- Leg 2 Brazil to South Africa
- Leg 3 South Africa to Australia
- Leg 4 Australia to China
- Leg 5 China to California
- Leg 6 California to Caribbean
- Leg 7 Caribbean to UK

"My goal was to come home with a better ranking than the previous two matches," Stanmore-Major said. "I did it."

Since first he worked as a bosun's mate on a Hong Kong tall ship at the age of 18, Stanmore-Major says he "fit into sailing like a square peg in a square hole."

A long-term resident of Hong Kong, he volunteered to captain the 68-foot *Qingdao*.

In recent years, he has competed in every major regatta in Hong Kong and is a veteran of many important yacht races.

#### Nine Chinese crew

Nine of the crewmembers on the *Qingdao* are Chinese selected from nearly

100 applicants nationwide. They work in professions ranging from a national-level public servant to manager and undergraduate. Four of them - Zhang Lizhong, Li Tiewa, Tangzhen and Yu Haiyang - served on the Singapore-Qingdao leg.

"I am as proud I can be one of the crewmembers," said 27-year-old Zhang, who has participated in many international sailing races.

"Everyone did great job during the voyage under adverse conditions," he said. "I learned not only sailing skills from the crew, but also about various aspects of life - like making British tea and food as well as adjusting myself to the pace onboard."

"Li Tiewa performed his duty well. He can speak perfect English and has good sailing skills," the captain said.

"The leg from Western Australia was the part of the race I most looked forward to," Li said. "I am very happy I could take part on behalf of our homeland."

Despite having no professional sailing training before the race, Tang Zhen and Yu Haiyang also made their mark.

"You gave me two boys, but I brought back two real men," said Stanmore-Major.

## Sailors wind down with festive family holiday

BY DAI YAN

Qingdao welcomed sailors of the 2009-10 Clipper Round the World Yacht race with New Year's celebrations and an invitation to spend time staying with local families over the Lantern Festival.

The race started on the Sept 13 and teams will sail a total of 35,000 nautical miles around the world, stopping at various locations along the way and end back in England in July.

Sailors were met with fireworks, dragon dances, and loud cheers from the crowds when they arrived into the port of Qingdao.

Bob Bell, crewmember of *Spirit of Australia*, was excited by the enthusiastic welcome. He loved the grand welcoming ceremony and said it made him feel like a hero.

Bob is the oldest of the *Spirit of Australia* crew. On the same day that the team celebrated winning first place in the fourth leg, Bob was celebrating his 61st birthday. He spent it with his wife Elaine, who came to Qingdao from their home in England to see him.

Luckily, the sailors arrived in China during Spring Festi-

val and welcomed the opportunity to take time out from hard work on the high seas to relax and enjoy the festivities.

Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center was decorated with red lanterns and ribbons. There were many shows including a lion dance opera, stilts and boat dance.

For most of the sailors this was their first visit to Qingdao. "I have never been to China before," said Russell Hallett, of the yacht *California* crew. "But I am familiar with it. Many things in our country - the clothes, the appliances, are made in China." He took off his coat to reveal the tag "Made in China".

"We are looking forward to spending our time in this beautiful coastal city," David Arnold, crew member of *Edinburgh Inspiring Capital*, said happily. "We've drunk a lot of Tsingtao Beer. I want to go to visit the factory before I leave."

Rather than drinking beer, Jodie Douglas and Emma Beaumont enjoyed the Chinese dragon dances. They got to dress up in professional performance outfits for their first real dance. "I love dragon dancing. We are lucky to have been invited here and there

are so many memories that I will take with me once I leave on my way around the rest of the world," Judie said.

As well as beer and dancing, some people strolled along the streets near the sailing center. There were myriad things to buy and lots of people picked up paper-cuttings or toy tigers as souvenirs and presents.

The many bars thronged with people in the evenings, where they sat drinking beer and enjoying the city view. "All the fatigue has gone after sitting here to have some drinks and looking out over the city," Judie said.

On February 28, 76 foreign crewmembers will join local families for the Chinese Lantern Festival and experience some traditional customs of Qingdao. They will make dumplings and *yuan xiao* - sticky rice balls with sweet filling - with the volunteers' families.

Members of the volunteer families will recite Tang Dynasty poetry in English and tell crewmembers about the origins of the Lantern Festival. They will also get to watch the many folk performances and fireworks.

