

Dealing with Pressure

Fort Lauderdale, Fla

August 31, 2007

It's good to be back in the USA. After landing just before midnight last Saturday, I've been very busy trying to get everything organized for our temporary move to Newport, Rhode Island, in preparation for the upcoming U.S. Olympic Team Trials in October.

Looking back on the 2007 Good Luck Beijing International Regatta I realize that the event was valuable in so many ways. Apart from all the vital information I gained about conditions in Qingdao on and off the water, I learned again how to win. And, I learned how to deal with the pressure of the media people who were all over your every move on the race course, good or bad.

It has been a very long time since I won an event. Come to think of it, this was really the first international event that I have won. Teens and a couple of top tens is a good way to sum up my slightly rocky spring season. Overall, it wasn't what I expected from myself. The main reason? I had lost sight of the fun aspect of the sport and had begun to put pressure on myself to perform. The reason I got into sailing and the reason for my past successes was because I was enjoying what I was doing. Granted, training is a lot of hard work, but then training isn't supposed to be fun. It's supposed to be painful, right? The fun comes when its time to compete. Going into Worlds this year I re-evaluated my goals and it seemed to have worked. I adopted the same mind-set going into the event in Qingdao. After putting too much pressure on myself the first day, I took a step back, adjusted my attitude and enjoyed the rest of the regatta. It seems to have worked again. With the US Team selection trials just a month away, this renewed sense of confidence is so important. The Trials are going to be a very difficult event, both physically and mentally.

Learning how to deal with the media brought its own benefits. Every day in China, the media were there after sailing to greet us as we hit the dock. Every day they wanted interviews, even days after my horrible opening performance. Days later I was still constantly asked, "What happened the first day?" "Why did you do so poorly?" "Why did you get this result in this race?" At first, dealing with this intensity was hard. After the first day, I'd come off the water quite chuffed with myself on how well I'd done only to be scrutinized about my performance. It was a bit of a downer really, but it was important to discover this was how the media works. They don't want to hear about how well you sailed, but more about where you made a mistake. I quickly began to appreciate that this was fine, because I just had to learn how to blow off the negativity in the question and turn it around to a positive.

We arrived back in Fort Lauderdale very late on Saturday, after just over 24 hours of traveling. Our flights went off without any hitches which was great when you have to travel so far, and for so long. Luckily, the long haul from Beijing to Chicago wasn't that full. We were sitting way in the back and had the chance to spread out a little. I didn't get much sleep but watched all the movies and hung out with other team members on board. After we landed in Chicago, I slept during the layover and the next flight.

We woke early on Sunday and began preparing for our tip up north. We are leaving today and driving to Norfolk, Virginia, where I am running in the Rock n' Roll Half Marathon in Virginia Beach. From there I will fly up to Detroit to skipper a boat in the US Women's Match Racing National Championship. My crew is Ali Sharp and Liz Bower. I'm really looking forward to this as a no-pressure event to compete in right before the Trials. However it's also a great chance to sharpen up my match racing skills. The event is from September 5-9 and you can follow it at Bayview Match Racing. And I'll report on it too.

From Detroit, I'm off to Newport where I will be training in the weeks leading up to the Trials. I'm keen to get back in the Radial and sail in some solid breeze. It's been a while. I can't wait to stretch my legs out rather than huddle over in the cockpit. My training partners, Tania Calles Wolf, from Mexico, and Lisa Ross , from Canada, will be in Newport to practice with me. My goal in this training is to make sure I'm back up to speed in the breeze, to figure out the local race course and conditions and, of course, to have fun. I will send out a couple reports of how training is going up in Newport.

I would really like to thank everyone for their continued support going forward into the Trials. I can really feel you all behind me. It makes it that much more meaningful to do it with everyone's support. And of course I would like to thank my sponsor Carmeuse for their continued support of my campaign in the quest to win a Gold Medal in 2008. You can visit their website at www.carmeusena.com. My website is www.annatunnicliffe.com.

Sail hard,

Anna