

Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing announce builder

Ian Walker's team commits to Italian firm

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Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority has appointed leading global manufacturing firm, Persico S.p.A., to build its state-of-the-art racing yacht for Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing team to participate in the 2011/12 Volvo Ocean Race.

Persico, based in Bergamo, Italy was appointed following a competitive tender exercise involving local and international suppliers from the UAE, Europe and the Far East.

The yacht build has already commenced in Persico's dedicated manufacturing facility in Northern Italy, in tandem with design work at Farr Yacht Design.

Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing expects to take delivery of its cutting-edge Volvo Open 70 yacht in June 2011, prior its the final development and training push prior to the start of the Volvo Ocean Race that October from Alicante, Spain.

"This is becoming a truly international project," said HE Mubarak Al Muhairi, Director General, ADTA, which lead-manages the Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing team. "We are intent in tapping on the best minds and resources the yachting industry can offer to press forward our Volvo Ocean Race ambitions."

Persico has close to two decades experience in the manufacturing of competitive racing yachts, having been behind a number of America's Cup entrants from Moro di Venezia in 1992 up to Luna Rossa in 2007, which qualified for the event's semi-finals. The company has also developed RC44 yachts for Russell Coutts.

"We believe Persico has the right credentials in terms of manufacturing experience, product innovation and its ability to deliver a highly competitive integrated build solution, so as to be a key enabler of our Volvo Ocean Race ambitions," explained Al Muhairi.

The build is being led by Persico's Operations Manager, Mark Somerville, who has previously been involved with the manufacture of five Volvo Ocean Race yachts and 10 America's Cup entries. The build of the new VOR70 will take approximately 45,000 man hours.

"Over the next eight months, under ADTA's supervision, the team will be involved in every step of the manufacturing process as we continually refine and enhance our Volvo Open 70. Getting it right can mean the difference between first and last," said Ian Walker, skipper of the 11-strong Abu Dhabi team crew hoping to stake its claim in one of the world's toughest, most extreme sporting challenges.

Meanwhile, plans are also being progressed with Abu Dhabi stakeholders for the UAE capital's New Year 2012 hosting of the Volvo Ocean Race prior to the yachting fleet embarking on to its third leg to Sanya, China. The emirate will host the first Middle East stopover in the event's 37-year history.

"We are determined to make our port stopover the best in race history and the race highlight as befits our three-pronged involvement. We are making Volvo Ocean Race history on three levels - we are the event's first destination partner, the only Middle East organisation to enter the race and the first Middle East host port," said Al Muhairi.