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Falmouth Olympic star Ainslie facing biggest test yet



By West Briton

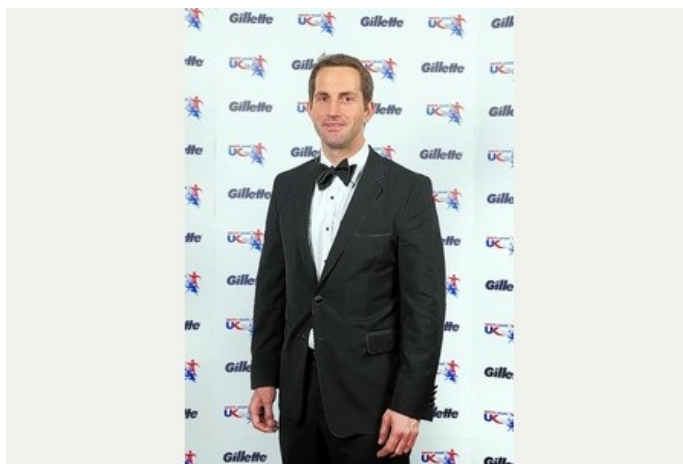
Thursday, December 12, 2013

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FALMOUTH'S Sir Ben Ainslie believes he is facing his biggest challenge yet – on or off the water.

Ainslie, who has won medals at five consecutive Olympic Games from 1996 to 2012, is currently on a fundraising and support drive to help raise money to launch a British America's Cup challenge.



LOCAL HERO: Sir Ben Ainslie pictured at the UK Coaching Awards.

The 36-year-old was a member of Oracle Team USA in this year's America's Cup, masterminding a stunning comeback to beat Emirates Team New Zealand 9-8 in San Francisco.

And the four-time Olympic champion, who learned to sail at Restrouguet, is hoping to put a team together to mount a challenge to bring the trophy back to the United Kingdom, where the America's Cup began in 1851.

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"I'm working very hard on the fundraising right now – it is a crucial part of having a British America's Cup boat," said Ainslie, talking at the UK Coaching Awards, supported by Gillette, which took place at the Montcalm Hotel, Marble Arch in London.

"The funds are crucial in building a team, I have had a lot of positive conversations and I'm still very hopeful but we need support and backing. There are dates we need to hit and ultimately by the New Year we need to have met those targets.

"We then need to wait and see where, when and what boats will be involved in the next America's Cup and decide how we integrate all of our partners.

"Obviously it is a lot of money to raise to have a competitive team for the future but we have had a tremendous amount of support from the public.

"Coming back from San Francisco, it was amazing to see that, globally, the America's Cup really took hold. I'm confident of having a very strong British team and I'm confident of having the funding and backing in place – but we need to keep working very hard.

Teamwork

"The America's Cup is about teamwork and we have an enormous number of fantastic sailors in the UK, who I know could be very successful.

"At the moment the America's Cup is not exclusive to nationalities – although predominantly we will have a British boat, we will also bring in people from other countries that can make a real impact to our team.

"The America's Cup is my focus right now and my future – I have moved away from the Olympic Games and this is what it's all about me."

The 2013 Gillette Great Starts' campaign celebrates community coaches and inspires the next generation of coaches by providing them with grants to fund their next level qualifications.

Applications for coaching grants available through the scheme will reopen in 2014, visit the facebook page, www.facebook.com/GilletteUK for more details.




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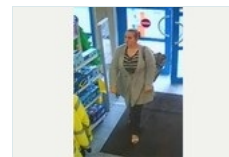
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