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Keyword: The Montcalm Marble Arch



He is the most successful sailor in Olympic history but according to Sir Ben Ainslie the Briton now faces 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.

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.



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And the four-time Olympic champion 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.

"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.

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"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.

"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 indeed.

"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."

Meanwhile, mentors of Ainslie were revealed as winners of the Coaching Chain Award at the UK Coaching Awards – an event attended by a host of big-names, including British & Irish Lions head coach Warren Gatland.

The award recognises the coaches that have contributed to an athlete's success, from firing their interest, or encouraging them in a sport, to developing their talent, to coaching them at the elite level.

The 'chain' for Ainslie is Phil Slater, Cathy Foster, Jim Saltonstall, John Derbyshire and David Howlett – in addition, it was also recognised that other people and coaches have contributed to his success.

Slater and his wife Jillian encouraged him into racing an Optimist, the class in which he enjoyed his first taste of international competition at a World Championships.

Foster coached Ainslie when he moved to the Laser class – he won his first World Championship title in the smaller Laser Radial in 1993, before enjoying similar success in the full rig in 1998.

Saltonstall is a key figure in the success of British Sailing, establishing a youth racing programme which is the envy of the world. He was team manager when Ainslie won silver and gold and he credits for 'getting them on the road'.

Derbyshire is RYA Performance Director and was Ainslie's coach from 1994 to 2000, during which time he took silver at Atlanta 1996 and gold at Sydney 2000 in the Laser.

Howlett supported Ainslie to achieve Olympic sailing history when he won his fourth straight Olympic gold at London 2012, making him the most successful sailor in Games history. He also helped him to secure his tenth World Championship title.

"It has been very nostalgic for me to look back at how I got into the sport of sailing," added Ainslie. "There are a lot of people who have helped me throughout my career but perhaps don't get the recognition they deserve so this is very pleasing.

"Coaching is a key element of turning a youngster with potential into a world star – these guys have been crucial for me and also for so many others

"Coaching is not just about the people at the top of their sports – yes, youngsters need heroes to look up to and inspire then but it's about grassroots coaching as well.

"I think it's vital we recognise our coaches. It's easy to remember the people on the podium at an Olympic Games but the coaches who have worked tirelessly with them behind the scenes are not often remembered.

"These are the people in the background making it happen, helping an athlete to improve and learn new techniques – they need to be

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honoured."

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 www.facebook.com/GilletteUK for more details.



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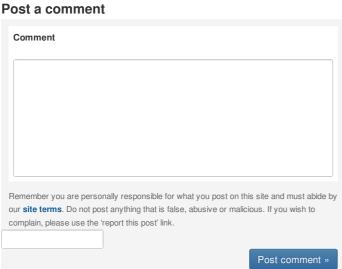
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