

## Brighton 'Rock' McDonald Shores Up Abu Dhabi's Title Hopes

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Brighton's highly decorated sailing veteran, Olympian Neal McDonald, has taken the helm as Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing's Performance Director in the team's second bid for Volvo Ocean Race glory next year.

Six-time Volvo Ocean Race legend McDonald has completed more than 200,000 nautical miles in the race over a nearly two decade long offshore career. Alongside skipper Ian Walker, from Hamble, he will lead Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing's technical programmes, training camps and crew development to streamline the team's victory pursuit in the 2014-15 Volvo Ocean Race, starting next October in Alicante, Spain.

McDonald takes the reins as Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing prepares for the Aberdeen Asset Management Cowes Week's Big Boat Races (6 - 8 August) and its defence of its Rolex Fastnet Race record next week (11 - 13 August) off the South Coast.

"I am lucky enough to have raced round the world six times and I hope to use my experience to ensure Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing wins this next race. With any offshore race, the next one is full of many varied challenges, some of which will not even be obvious at the start of the campaign. The solutions to each will inevitably involve a series of complex compromises," said the 50-year-old, father-of-two.

"Getting the right balance in each of these compromises will be a huge part of winning this next race. Particularly with a one design boat playing centre stage in the 2014-15 race, the biggest challenge will be to get the best out of the entire team at all the critical stages of the campaign. Getting the right personnel and planning the campaign properly from the start appear to be the most important parts to getting it right.

"After the last race it was clear to me that, at my stage in life, I was not going to do another Volvo campaign that involved me as a sailor in a manner that I had before. I had never given up on the possibility of getting involved in a more behind-the-scenes role. When Ian Walker started talking to me I was excited to hear more, as I see Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing having a real chance of winning this race."

A qualified naval architect, McDonald, who spent his early days sailing on the River Hamble from Warsash Sailing Club, started ocean racing with Lawrie Smith, who was a team-mate at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, when McDonald was campaigning Flying Dutchman's (6th) class and Smith a Soling (4th).

Smith carried on his Olympic sailing, winning bronze at Barcelona in 1992 and while McDonald briefly campaigned a 49er, becoming European champion, his Olympic career was side-lined in favour of big boats.

Taking on his first Volvo Ocean Race (Whitbread Round The World Race) campaign with Smith's Fortuna in 1993 - 94, McDonald found his passion for the open waters, which would see him take on the global sailing odyssey a further five more times, including joining the now Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing skipper on board Green Dragon in 2008-09 and more recently as watch leader with Iker Martinez's Team Telefonica in 2011/12.

Abu Dhabi city, the UAE capital, will host the third 2014 - 15 Volvo Ocean Race stopover from mid-December 2014 until 3 January 2015.

Abu Dhabi will welcome the fleet from Recife, Brazil after one of the longest and potentially most-gruelling legs in the 40-year race history (9,707 nautical miles). The Abu Dhabi Etihad Airways In-Port Race, which was won by home favourites Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing in the last edition, will take place on 2 January 2015, with the fleet departing for Sanya, China the following day.

Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), which is behind the emirate's race campaign as well as the stopover, is pushing forward a package-strong and tourism-driven event, including a fan-friendly Destination Village on the stunning Abu Dhabi Corniche breakwater as well as a compelling entertainment programme to leverage the highly sought-after Christmas and New Year dates.

For more information on Abu Dhabi in the Volvo Ocean Race, visit:  
[www.volvooceanraceabudhabi.com](http://www.volvooceanraceabudhabi.com)

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About Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority:

Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) conserves and promotes the heritage and culture of Abu Dhabi emirate and leverages them in the development of a world-class, sustainable destination of distinction which enriches the lives of visitors and residents alike.

The authority manages the emirate's tourism sector and markets the destination internationally through a wide range of activities aimed at attracting visitors and investment. Its policies, plans and programmes relate to the preservation of heritage and culture, including protecting archaeological and historical sites and to developing museums, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

TCA Abu Dhabi supports intellectual and artistic activities and cultural events to nurture a rich cultural environment and honour the emirate's heritage. A key authority role is to create synergy in the destination's development through close co-ordination with its wide-ranging stakeholder base.

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