9b21c023

Tracy Edwards and *Maiden* (D): marie-claude

Tracy Edwards, Gerard Seijts, and Ann Frost wrote this case solely to provide material for class discussion. The authors do not intend to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. The authors may have disguised certain names and other identifying information to protect confidentiality.

This publication may not be transmitted, photocopied, digitized, or otherwise reproduced in any form or by any means without the permission of the copyright holder. Reproduction of this material is not covered under authorization by any reproduction rights organization. To order copies or request permission to reproduce materials, contact Ivey Publishing, Ivey Business School, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada, N6G 0N1; (t) 519.661.3208; (e) cases@ivey.ca; www.iveycases.com. Our goal is to publish materials of the highest quality; submit any errata to publishcases@ivey.ca. i1v2e5y5pubs

Copyright © 2021, Ivey Business School Foundation Version: 2021-06-22

In the weeks leading up to the September 2, 1989, start of the Whitbread Round the World Race, Tracy Edwards had a problem with her first mate, French-born Marie-Claude Kieffer. With her deep experience in yacht racing, Kieffer brought considerable confidence to the crew. When she heard about Edwards and her intention to field an all-female crew in the Whitbread, Kieffer immediately sent her resume to Edwards and applied to be on the boat. Given Kieffer’s experience, Edwards took her on. Kieffer eventually brought two of her sailing comrades with her to the *Maiden* crew: Jeni Mundi, an English electronics specialist, and Michèle Paret, another French woman and one of the world’s top helmsmen.

From the start, Kieffer proved to be a difficult personality. She clashed with Edwards, but more importantly, she waged a running battle with *Maiden*’s boat builder, Duncan Walker, over various refits of the boat. The arguments went on for the six months leading up to the start of the race, and the constant battle to determine whose vision would be followed increased the stress on Edwards and the team. Kieffer was a highly skilled first mate and all-around sailor who, unlike Edwards, had extensive experience in racing yachts flat out. Her expertise and experience brought considerable value to *Maiden*. Edwards knew that, to not just race the Whitbread but also show how well an all-female crew could do against the traditional male teams, she would need to field the best crew she could find.

In August 1989, shortly before the Whitbread start, *Maiden* set out to compete in the biennial Fastnet Race, a five- to six-day race of 1,126 kilometres (608 nautical miles) that tested both inshore and offshore racing skills. Like Edwards, Kieffer hoped to signal that *Maiden* was a serious contender and that her all-female crew ought to be taken seriously. In an effort to make *Maiden* as fit as possible, Kieffer ordered a severe lightening of *Maiden*’s load: nothing superfluous was to remain on the boat—not even the full medical kit.

The boat headed out to race, and as luck would have it, Jo Gooding, Edwards’s childhood friend and *Maiden*’s cook, fell and broke her wrist midway through the race. With no medical kit on board, doctor (and sailor) Claire Russell could only supply Gooding with aspirin. *Maiden* was forced to abandon her lead and the race and head back to port, with Gooding in agony.

Kieffer’s decision to race light had caused this situation and brought 17 hours of agony to Gooding. Yet racing light was what yachts needed to do to win. Edwards wanted above all to win and prove that an all-female boat could race with the “big boys.” Kieffer was an ace sailor, but Edwards also cared deeply about her team. She knew the team also wanted to win, but at what cost?

The tensions over the previous months had had a discernible impact on the team. Edwards knew things had to change: there had been constant strife, arguments, and power plays. But Edwards also worried that she did not have what it took to skipper *Maiden* without Kieffer. Could Edwards and Kieffer find a way to work together? Could the two leaders negotiate a shared approach to leadership? And if so, how?