

SEAMASTER Award 2019 for Carolijn Brouwer

The woman who flies across the water

She has participated three times already in the Volvo Ocean Race, the world's toughest offshore regatta. Last year, together with the Dongfeng Race Team, she triumphed in the world's longest race around the world – making her the first woman ever to win the race. In honour of this historic victory, which was decided in the last miles of the final leg of the race, Dutch sailor Carolijn Brouwer was presented with the SEAMASTER Award 2019 on Saturday evening at Boot Düsseldorf

Bielefeld/Düsseldorf, 20 January 2019. Carolijn Brouwer has already won many international titles and celebrated major victories in dinghies and sports catamarans. The 45-year-old Dutch sailor has twice been named World Sailor of the Year – the first time 20 years ago. Hardly any other female water sports athlete has managed to hold her position as a world leader for so long.

Her greatest success to date – one that she had been working towards for years – was achieved only recently, and practically right on her own doorstep: taking first place in the Volvo Ocean Race 2017/2018, which ended in The Hague. And it was a very hard-earned victory. It was only in the final phase of the twelfth and final leg of the race that Brouwer's Dongfeng Race Team was able to prevail against two competitors that had been going head-to-head with them up to that point. Tens of thousands of fans on the shore of The Hague and hundreds of thousands of viewers around the world held their breath during the thrilling finale.

“Just a few hours earlier, it was looking as though we wouldn't win,” recalls the six-foot-tall athlete, who is called either “Caro” or “Giro” by her crew (“Giro” for “giraffe”, since she's taller than most of the others on board). Yet in a tactical feat, the mixed team – consisting of experienced professional sailors under French skipper Charles Caudrelier – eked out the victory in the end. Besides “Giro”, the team also included France's Marie Riou and Switzerland's Justine Mettraux. But only one of the women was on board for all of the offshore legs of the race, without sitting one out: Carolijn Brouwer.

Brouwer, who is married and has a seven-year-old son, takes a professional view of her role on board. She takes no stock in discussions about female quotas or the gender imbalance in sports, although her historic victory will doubtlessly encourage many women to follow her lead in sailing – a sport still dominated by men.

Before the start of the Volvo Open Race, Brouwer told the magazine YACHT: “We don’t see ourselves as women and men on board. We’re a crew. And we want to win this race. That’s why we’re going to give everything we have to reach our common goal.”

Brouwer, whose positive attitude is contagious and who is both intelligent and funny, is very demanding of herself. The professional sailor resides in Australia and lives by the motto “Never a dull moment!”.

One of the highest compliments paid to her came from Charles Caudrelier: “If I had the choice to assemble a crew, I would choose Carolijn any time over most of the guys, because of her good attitude, motivation and sailing skills.”

Konrad Delius (publisher at Delius Klasing Verlag) and Petros Michelidakis (director of Boot Düsseldorf) explain the SEAMASTER jury’s decision for Brouwer as follows: “She is, without a doubt, an exceptional sailor. With the SEAMASTER Award, we not only honour Carolijn Brouwer for her historic victory in the Volvo Open Race, but we also pay tribute to a strong character who will continue setting the tone in the world of sailing.”

For seven years, Boot Düsseldorf and Delius Klasing Verlag have been presenting this award jointly to individuals for outstanding achievements in water sports. Previous winners have included the sailing legend Loïck Peyron, America’s Cup skipper Jimmy Spithill, and ocean advocate Emily Penn. The awards ceremony traditionally takes place at FLAGSHIP NIGHT, the maritime gala held on the opening weekend of Boot Düsseldorf.

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