Cruising tips from a round-the-world racer

The fifth finisher in the 2022 Golden Globe Race, Jeremy Bagshaw shares how he prepared his OE32 for a circumnavigation alone

She was one of the saddest boats I'd ever seen, but her lines were beautiful. *Olleanna*, an Olle Enderlein-designed OE 32 with a dark blue hull, caught my eye in a way that few boats ever have; it was love at first sight as I stared down at her from the dock at the Royal Cape Yacht Club in Cape Town.

In South Africa, we don't see a lot of foreign designs other than the run-of-the-mill French production boats from Beneteau, Dufour and Jeanneau, so *Olleanna* stood out. I started asking around and found she'd been entered in the 2018 Golden Globe Race by her Norwegian owner and skipper, Are Wiig. Are was in fourth position in the race when he suffered a knockdown and capsized around 400 miles south-west of Cape Town. He was dismasted and the coachroof was damaged by the falling rig.

He managed to erect a jury rig using twin spinnaker poles and sail unassisted to Cape Town showing true seamanship. On arrival, she was eventually purchased by a local boatbuilder who repaired the structural damage and stepped a new rig.

It was at this stage I stumbled across her and the seeds of an adventure were planted in my mind! It wasn't long before I was researching the design and how Are had fared in the build-up to the Golden Globe Race and the first 8,000 miles of the race. He'd sailed *Olleanna* up to the edge of the Arctic Circle and had set a record time for the return leg south along the Norwegian coast. Over 200 hulls have been built in Denmark and Sweden since 1971 – *Olleanna* was Swedish-built in 1973 – and some of them had done remarkable voyages in the North Atlantic giving credibility to the legendary sea-keeping attributes of the design.

Craftsmanship

The Olle Enderlein 32 is a full keel, cutter-rigged cruising boat with the rudder hung off the trailing edge of the keel below

BELOW At 32ft, *Olleanna* was the smallest boat in the 2022 Golden Globe Race fleet, but had the second longest waterline and was one of just five boats to finish

Katy Strickland

a 'North Se
commonly
has a gene
(27ft 6in) o
5in) and a
ratio of 14.
is neither u
cruising. D
6,200kg p
equivalent
but this is
more seve
inevitably
circumnav
short hop
boats of th

The des
boat and

Katy Stickland

RIGHT Are Wiig sailed 400 miles under jury rig to Cape Town after *Olleanna* was dismasted in the 2018 Golden Globe Race

LEFT The rudder of the OE32 is hung off the trailing edge of the keel below her North Sea transom

Eban Human/PPL/GGR

a 'North Sea transom' sometimes more commonly known as a double-ender. She has a generous waterline length of 8.38m (27ft 6in) on a length overall of 9.89m (32ft 5in) and a decent sail area/displacement ratio of 14.48 indicating a forgiving rig that is neither under nor overpowered for cruising. Displacement of a little over 6,200kg puts her on the heavier side of equivalent-length modern production boats but this is a comforting factor given the more severe weather conditions that will inevitably be encountered on a circumnavigation as opposed to coastal and short hop cruising that modern production boats of this size are designed for.

The designer hit a sweet spot with this boat and created a wonderful balance between performance in all weather conditions, comfortable sea-keeping qualities, seaworthiness and roominess below decks.

The best route

The route of my circumnavigation was the traditional tradewind route from west to east. I departed from Les Sables d'Olonne, France, and sailed back there some 278 days later via the three Great Capes – Good Hope, Leeuwin and Horn. As part of the race route, we needed to pass check-in points at Lanzarote, Cape Town and Hobart; we also had to leave Isla Trinidade to port, latitude 44°S to starboard while in the Indian Ocean and latitude 47°S to starboard in the Pacific Ocean, with a few modifications to allow rounding of Cape Horn at 56°S.

An early September start in France gives a small-boat sailor the best chance of passing into the Southern Ocean in the Austral summer and of rounding Cape Horn before the Austral autumn – and the greater possibility of inclement weather – sets in.

The first two months of the voyage were spent in mainly summery weather as we traversed the temperate and tropical regions with some tradewind conditions, but also a lot of squally tropical weather.

The voyager needs to be prepared for conditions that frequently change in direction and intensity. This requires a conservative approach to sail selection and watchkeeping strategy to minimise the risk of damage to the boat and sails.

After entering the South Atlantic, the effects of the constant west-east flow of air means that while conditions are more predictable, they are also more extreme.

Passage planning in this region is all about weighing up the pros and cons of sailing a shorter distance with bigger weather at higher latitudes versus warmer and probably milder conditions in the temperate zones with a good chance of contrary (easterly) winds.

Prepare for success

When planning to undertake any ocean passage, the better your preparation, the more enjoyable the sail is likely to be. For a circumnavigation, and in my case a non-stop one, preparation was paramount given that I needed to be completely

GGR2022/DD&JJ

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeremy Bagshaw
South African Jeremy Bagshaw has been sailing since he was a child, and has raced dinghies and offshore, culminating in coming 5th in the 2022 Golden Globe Race. He has also cruised the Indian Ocean in a steel Dudley Dix 43, which he built himself, and has sailed the coasts of South Africa and South America, across the Indian Ocean, and the South and North Atlantic. He is currently building a Lyle Hess-designed Falmouth Cutter 34.

Macmedia2021/Simon McDonnell

self-sufficient for 30,000 miles.

While I admittedly prepared my boat with a round-the-world race in mind, I accept that other sailors may have a different philosophy. But having been one of only six starters out of 16 to finish, I believe that preparing a boat for racing may be a very good standard to work towards, even when you only intend to cruise.

When I bought *Olleanna* in December 2019 she was still showing all the signs of a boat that had suffered a knockdown and capsize, damage to the deck and serious water ingress. I realized that I had a mountain to climb in terms of the refit.

My choice of boat was limited by a few factors, among them being affordability, availability and compliance with the 2022 Golden Globe Notice of Race.

The OE 32 fitted neatly into the race requirements, albeit on the lower end of all the parameters.

I took some comfort in the fact that *Suhaili*, Robin Knox-Johnston's boat in the 1968 event, was also 32ft LOA although *Suhaili* displaced considerably more. I also researched the causes of *Olleanna*'s dismasting and after chatting to her previous owner, Are, I was comfortable that he'd been incredibly unlucky with a set of circumstances that conspired to knock him down in 'one in a million' conditions. I was confident that I'd chosen a design that was fast enough to be competitive and robust and seaworthy enough to see me safely around the globe.

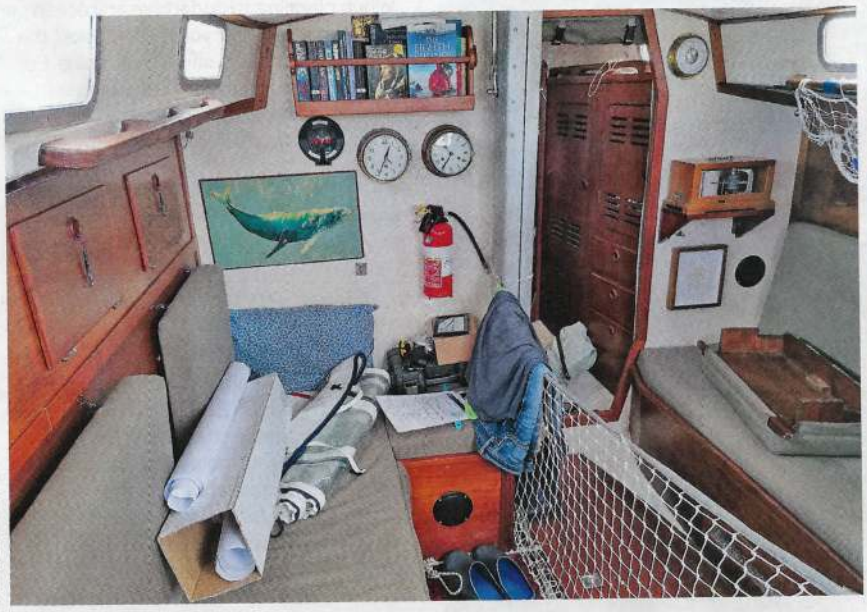
Olleanna's refit forced me to look at some of the conventionally accepted norms, especially in terms of sizing, durability, complexity and cost of equipment. Upfront I decided to avoid cutting-edge new technology, anything I couldn't either repair myself or do without if I wasn't able to repair it. I decided to over-size what I could without affecting the overall performance and to add strength to the deck and rig components wherever I could.

The second decision I made, which with the benefit of hindsight was critically important, was to introduce as much redundancy into every system as possible. I tried to ensure that there was no way that the failure of a single component in a critical system would lead to the complete failure of the system.

A second pair of hands

Without a doubt, the most crucial part of passage making, especially for a solo sailor, is self-steering; it is invaluable. The correct system for your boat will steer 24 hours a day in all conditions, freeing the skipper up to get enough rest, keep well fed, keep a good lookout when necessary, attend to navigation, maintenance and a myriad of other tasks that need addressing daily on board.

The Golden Globe Race rules permitted only the use of windvane self-steering systems in keeping with the ethos of the original 1968 race. There are several windvane self-steering manufacturers but competitors needed to submit reasons for selecting one that was not on the approved list. There were two elements to this process. Cynics might say the fact one manufacturer of an approved system was also a race sponsor had something to do with this, but the reality is that the 2018 race proved beyond doubt that some manufacturers produce more robust systems suited to the rigours of a non-stop



Katy Stickland

BELOW ***Olleanna*'s saloon, just days before the start of the Golden Globe Race; tennis net is to dry wet gear, act as another handhold and prevent objects sliding around the saloon floor**

Jeremy Bagshaw

ABOVE Jeremy did a lot of the refit work himself. The yacht had a new Sparcraft mast

spinnaker pole stowage fittings which were bolted to a backing plate below decks. These fittings were made to be used as the bases for a jury rig as well.

The last enhancement was an idea pinched from modern cruising catamaran rigging. It was a combination step and also a basket to stow all halyard and reefing line tails.

I decided to keep all halyards and reefing at the mast rather than bring them back to the cockpit and the resulting halyard tails can be hard to keep tidy without a storage solution. The step also gave me the extra height needed when attaching the main halyard to the head of the mainsail which stacks quite high with five full battens and meant I didn't need to balance precariously to reach it.

We decided not to have a moveable/adjustable spinnaker pole mast side fitting, opting instead for simplicity and two fixed rings at carefully calculated heights.

I also specified a Profurl roller furler one size up from the manufacturer's recommended size.

I believe that the combination of all of the above gave me a completely hassle-free rig experience. There's always the weakest link in any chain and in my case it was a weld on the forestay stem fitting/chainplate that sheared 800 miles from the finish, leaving me unable to fly a genoa or sail upwind in variable conditions with only a staysail.

Cockpit drains

A large part of preparation is anticipating things that could go wrong but are outside your range of experiences. This is where preparing a cruising boat according to the requirements of a race makes sense. The regulations have often been formulated from a very broad base of experience in real-world situations.

One of the Golden Globe Race requirements was that the cockpit must be able to drain very quickly if filled by beam or following seas. On *Olleanna*, we exceeded the recommended cockpit drain volume by around 50% which proved to be a good move on the few occasions where I was swamped. With a boat that does not have a cockpit open to the transom, it is critical to get any excess water back overboard as quickly as possible. As we all know, one cubic metre of water weighs a ton and even a small cockpit like *Olleanna*'s could easily hold 400kg of water which very definitely impacts the boat's handling at a critical time.

Jeremy Bagshaw

The Watt & Sea hydrogenerator worked well as lohg as the boat speed was 4 knots or more

Designed-in redundancy

These are all the systems on *Olleanna* that were designed to provide backup in the event of failure of a component of the main system.

'Prepare well and be respectful of the power of nature'

- **Twin mainsheet system:** not only does this provide additional control during manoeuvres but it also gives great control over mainsail shape and if one fails, there's another already in place.
- Watt & Sea **hydrogenerator** and **solar PV system:** to keep batteries charged to power onboard systems it's necessary to have a regular or constant charge. On a circumnavigation, you're often in areas where there is significant cloud cover or even when there is adequate sunshine, the course you're sailing (usually west to east) means that the boat's PV system is often shaded for a large part of the day. To compensate, you can use a towed or transom-mounted hydrogenerator. I used a Watt & Sea 300W Long Leg Cruising unit which kept a steady incoming charge whenever boat speed was 4 knots or more.
- **Twin spinnaker poles** and pole topping lifts provided redundancy if one was damaged or lost.
- I used **twin foreguys** (spinnaker pole downhauls) for the same reason. These also doubled up as gybe preventers, attaching quickly and easily to permanently rigged preventer lines on the boom. Twin halyards for spinnakers, genoa and mainsail made changeover an easy and risk-free process.
- I did not have a furling drum on my inner forestay and instead used a **hanked-on staysail** and **storm jib**; in the event of a failed furler, I'd still be able to set foresails. This wasn't always convenient, and changing down from staysail to storm jib usually involved getting pretty cold and occasionally wet!
- A **tiller comb** was traditionally used on

BELOW A displacement of just over 6,200kg makes *Olleanna* less prone to weather-induced damage than lighter, equivalent-length modern production boats

Macmedia2021/Simon McDonnell

Pilot Cutte
another 'p
when the
sailing sh
underesti
leave the
attend to
steering
take over.

My tille
crew mem
conditions
for the wi
motoring,
the transo

Shelte

There's a
stay dry t
more true
getting w
health an
Essential
are a few

- **Cloth**

afford. Ba
be carefu
products
for base-
they also

Katy Stickland

Pilot Cutters and the like to provide another 'pair of hands' to hold the tiller when the skipper needed theirs! When sailing short-handed, you can never underestimate the value of being able to leave the helm, even for short periods, to attend to other matters and your self-steering may not always be available to take over.

My tiller comb was effectively my third crew member and was used extensively in conditions where the wind was too light for the windvane to be effective when motoring, or when I had my Windpilot off the transom for servicing.

Shelter from the elements

There's an old saying that 'it's easier to stay dry than to get dry' and this is never more true than in the high latitudes where getting wet can have serious comfort, health and safety consequences. Essential to the principle of staying dry are a few considerations.

• **Clothing:** get the best gear you can afford. Base, mid and outer layers need to be carefully considered. Merino wool products have become the default gear for base-and mid-layers. Warm and light, they also have the most desirable property of not retaining any body odour!

Outer layers are equally important and this technology has advanced hugely in the last decades with many brands using industry-leader Gore-Tex fabric. I used North Sails Offshore gear over South African Core Merino base-and mid-layers and even in the most miserable conditions, I stayed completely dry and warm.

• **Footwear:** like the head, if your feet are wet and cold the rest of the body will not be comfortable. Choose sailing boots that are high enough to prevent ingress when working in the scuppers, and have good non-slip soles. Make sure they're a few sizes bigger than your normal deck shoes so they can be slipped on over a couple of pairs of socks in a hurry. Leather looks great, but rubber/plastic uppers are more waterproof and require less maintenance.

• **Spray dodger/hood** and **cockpit tent:** never underestimate the importance of this piece of deck gear. It provides a sheltered spot for you to stay in touch with conditions on deck but without having to subject yourself to the full force of the elements, especially in a smaller boat where the cockpit is naturally more exposed. The cockpit tent enclosure is a wonderful addition to the standard dodger, especially when sailing downwind for extended periods with rain and following seas as it allows you to keep the companionway washboards stowed and airflow and connection with the outside.

There are pros and cons to having the spray dodger constructed from fabric over a folding stainless steel frame or from rigid materials like plywood etc. With the benefit of hindsight, I'd opt for the hard construction next time.

• **Ventilation:** condensation is a real factor in higher latitudes, especially when sailing with more than one crew on board. Mould will develop in every nook and cranny aboard. The key to minimising this is good insulation and decent ventilation.

• **Heating:** in the higher latitudes it is cold. Managing it for the comfort of the crew can be as simple as dressing with more layers or as sophisticated as installing solid or liquid fuel heaters. In a small boat, space and weight are constant considerations and taking extra fuel for heating can be a challenge. I opted for the simplicity of just wearing more layers and having a very well-insulated sleeping bag – less weight, less to break and no chance of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Sails and running rigging

It may seem obvious but sails are the boat's engine and consequently a critical component of a successful passage; this often doesn't hit home until sail damage affects the ability to make proper way.

I paid particular attention to the positioning of reef points on my mainsail and the construction of tack and leech patches where loads are higher than normal. Essential for me was when using a second reef, the head of the sail should

Katy Stickland

LEFT The tiller comb was effective in light winds

BELOW Buy the best base, mid and outer clothing layers you can afford. Jeremy wore North Sails Offshore gear and stayed dry in storms

Riaan Smit

JL Lhomond

be below the level of the running backstay attachments so I could have both runners tensioned during gybes and tacks. I also decided against a storm trysail but rather had a very deep third reef and this served me well up to around 40 knots apparent. After that, I was usually under bare poles!

My storm jib saw much active service from around 35 knots apparent when the staysail became too big. Under triple reefed main and storm jib, *Olleanna* was reasonably comfortable up to around 40 knots.

I also specified a slightly higher clew on my yankee-styled genoa to give me a better view under the sail from the companionway and a better lead for poling out the sail when going downwind without having to re-route the sheets over the guardwires. All little details, but they made sailing easier and safer.

I started the race with a brand new set of running rigging. I replaced every halyard, reefing line and sheet. I kept the set that had around 10,000 miles on it as spares and was very careful to label each line that I removed and replaced so that it would be easy to identify a replacement in a hurry. As it happened, on the whole 32,000-mile voyage, I replaced only a single spinnaker halyard and a spinnaker sheet that had a small amount of chafe developing.

Communication

Keeping in touch with the outside world during an extended passage has become something we all expect these days. With everything from HF and VHF radio to satellite communication and Starlink connectivity available at ever more affordable rates, there is not much to debate on this topic.

What I can say though, is that as a committed satphone and email aficionado, I was pleasantly surprised at the ease of use and practicality of my old

Jeremy Bagshaw

ABOVE *Olleanna* had brand new running rigging; only a spinnaker halyard and spinnaker sheet needed replacing during the 32,000-mile race

LEFT When sailing downwind in bad weather, Jeremy made plenty of use of the cockpit tent

Icom M802 set, which was installed with a backstay antenna and an automatic tuner. I had no choice in the selection of HF as my primary communication tool as it was part of the race rules, and I was initially quite sceptical as to its usefulness.

But having chatted to shore stations and other yachts over distances of many thousands of miles, free, I can safely say I'm convinced that HF radio has a purpose and a place on board cruising boats today.

Training is key

Before embarking on a solo voyage where you need to be very self-sufficient, it's a good idea to brush up on some skills.

- **Celestial navigation:** if the boat suffers complete electrical failure, you'll be glad you took the refresher celestial navigation course. Although we were compelled to use sextants as our sole source of establishing position, it is something I'll incorporate into my passage making routine in the future.
- **Medical:** while the chances of picking up viruses out at sea are almost nil, injury is always a possibility. Medical help is probably many days away, so the crew must be proficient in advanced First Aid. Having a good physician on call via satellite phone is another good option and several companies offer this service.
- **Mechanical:** Although we all put to sea in sailboats, with auxiliary power, it is inconvenient when facing a recalcitrant engine and almost flat batteries! The crew must be able to resolve basic engine issues as this can be the difference between negotiating a tricky safe haven entry and having to stand off a lee shore in foul conditions at the end of a long passage. Muck in a fuel tank will quickly make its way into filters and diesel injectors so the crew should have an intimate knowledge of the vessel's fuel system.

Conclusion

Is a 32ft monohull an ideal boat to circumnavigate with? The boat you have is the best one to circumnavigate with! If it's on the smaller side, like a 32-footer, then preparation becomes that much more important. Smaller boats are more susceptible to weather-induced damage than boats with heavier displacement and longer waterlines but a larger-sized vessel is no guarantee of a successful voyage.

Prepare well, route conservatively, be patient and be respectful of the power of nature and you'll give yourself the best chance. Many sailors have successfully circumnavigated in smaller vessels, so don't let that be a reason to not set out on the voyage of a lifetime. PBO