

1 EARLY DAYS

Tim: I went sailing because my sister started sailing. I was down the club quite a lot and so I thought I'm here so I may as well give it a go. I always wanted to beat my sister so an extra incentive! So I got into a boat and started going.

James: My dad and his dad have always sailed and we have a yacht down at the sailing club at Levington which we went out on quite a lot. So I was always going to do a lot of sailing. I started sailing "Oppies" at Alton Water when I was about 5 or so, casually – not competing. Then started crewing for someone in Cadets at Waldringfield. Then I started helming when I was about 13. So I was 13 when I was in charge of my own boat – calling the shots

Tim: 2001 was my first event when I was about 8. You tend to sail with someone for quite a long time. I did that with a chap called Hamish Staine from about 2002 and then we got into East Sailing and won the under 14's prior to the Nationals and slowly progressed from there.

James: When I was crewing I wasn't good at all! Although I enjoyed crewing we didn't do that well. My helmsman was really young so we won the under 13 prizes then as we got older we slipped slowly backwards! Also we were quite heavy together as well. But it started to get better when I started to helm. When we were in Cadets at junior level, we sailed against each other; we had quite a good rivalry at the club and all the events. We've only been sailing together for about 18 months in the 420. I probably got the better of Tim more often than not but right at the end he beat me in the last Nationals so he's got that one!

2 TRAINING

James: People think we just sit on the side of a boat and hold a stick – don't have to do too much. It's seen as quite a relaxed sport but really it's not like that. We've been out in the winter and when you can't feel your hands or your feet you wonder why on earth you do it. It all makes it worth it when you win events.

We have one National squad every month and every week we do our own training. We are not doing too much at the moment because we have a lot of revision for A Levels but normally for a typical National squad we'd do 6 to 8 hours. Usually we email in before the week end to let Neil – the Head Coach – know what we want to work in and they then decide who the specialist coach is going to be. For example if we all decide we want to work on communication with our crew, they might bring an Olympic crew along who we can gain their insight into it.

There's a lot to do. For example rigging the boat is about 40 minutes and then you have all our settings to go through and check.

Tim: We have different ways to rig the boat. We have mast rigs to alter the tension on the shrouds to help you point into the wind. We can alter how far forward or back the mast is to give us more or less power when it's windy or light winds. It's a case of setting up the boat so you can go as fast as you can.

James: Basically, the further forward the mast is – the boom stays in the same place but the sail gets stretched which creates a different shape in the sail. The lighter the wind, the further forward you put the mast to change the shape of the sail.

When it's windier you want to depower the sails so you bring the mast back. Then there are other things. For example "pre-bend" is the amount of bend you put in the mast so it again changes the shape of the sail. The wind is changing all the time, so you have to try as close to the windward mark as you can. So when the wind shifts, you point near to it, which is a good tack to be on – that's called a "lift". And when it shifts and you are pointing further away it's called a "header". So you always want to tack on the header so you are on the lift, so you are always sailing as near to the mark as possible. You can't always tell if you have changed your header by perhaps one degree, so the compass is quite useful. If you've changed by perhaps 3 degrees you know you have to tack whereas without the compass you have nothing to reference yourself with.

We'll go out, go up and down a couple of times just to warm up and then do as many tacks up wind and as many jibes down wind to make sure our technique is absolutely nailed.

Tim: The 420 is named because it is 4.2 metres long. It has class measurement rules so everything is really strict, you can't be out with measurements at all, you've got to be bang on the limits perhaps allowed a millimetre here or there. All the boats are pretty much the same.

James: You've got to focus yourself, there's no one there to help you along, encourage you. If you want to do well you have to be disciplined and train as much as you can.

Tim: Especially on the east. We are pretty much the only people in the east who sail at this level. So the people down in the south are going out with each other, working with each other to get better but we have to do it ourselves really.

James: The Olympic committee classed sailing as the most complicated sport out of all the Olympic disciplines. We've run through all the settings and so on which are complicated but out on the water, the tactical decisions you have to make are split second and if it's an hour long race you have to be doing something different every few seconds to make sure you remain the fastest boat. It's much more complicated than most people imagine. It's very hard to explain.

Tim: If you try to explain to someone who is watching sailing on the TV – it's a nightmare!

3 SELECTION

James: There's the east Zone Squad, so there are zones for each area in the country. They select an event or two events that they use as their selection criteria. Normally there are the East Zone Championships and then an Open meeting. As long as you do well, they will pick the top 15 to be in their squad. They may also have a coach on the water who could decide they want particular people in the team. So that's how you get into that squad and then Junior level for the National squads is much the same. The class and the Royal Yacht Assoc set normally three or four events, which are selection events for the World

Championships and for the squads. They may say they want 10 boats in the squad so pick the top 10.

Tim: Last year when we started sailing 420s we decided not to do the National Championships – we would do the Cadet Championships, as this would be our last one. So that put us – when we went into 420s – in a pretty bad place that we didn't know about! We didn't get selected for any squads – so we had to do our own training all winter and summer and had to work by ourselves, we didn't get any support. In the following Nationals we were given the Robert Dix Memorial trophy which is awarded to the boat that has received no RYA coaching or support. Overall in the event we came 9th, which is pretty good considering that everyone else in the top 25 has RYA coaching. After the Nationals we were actually selected for the RYA National squad, which at the time was the top six in the country. That squad has grown as the RYA want to give the squad a more racing feel to it. We have just finished the selection process for the World and Junior Europeans, which is 3 events – two weekends, and a weeklong event – which had 24 races in it in the whole series. We came third in that which was second for the males – we were quite pleased with that. So we are off to do the World's in Israel this year and Juniors in La Rochelle.

James: Top 7 boys and top 7 girls go to Israel and the top 7 overall go to the junior Europeans.

Tim: This summer we need to medal in the Worlds and Europeans. If we medal in those we get to go into the Olympic development squad in the 470 class. We then need to really get going in the 470s – get to as many events as we can to try and get selected for 2012.

James: You can't get into the Olympics until you get to sail the 470s. The 420 is just a transition class between junior and Olympic. Really 2012 is probably too soon for us we are probably looking at 2016 because we have to change class to the 470, which will take us about a year to set up and get established on the circuit. That then only leaves us one more year to 2012 to get selected and it's unlikely that they are going to go with two new untested guys – even if we did well.

4 THE GAMES

5 FUNDING

Tim: Our boats cost about £5000, sails £1500 – luckily we have sponsorship for those and get them half price. Kit we wear is probably another £400 on top of that. Rudder, tiller, spares for the boat – it soon adds up.

James: Suffolk Sports Aid have given us each £1500 towards our sailing which goes in about 3 months – doesn't last for long unfortunately. John Merrick sailing trust is another sponsor of ours – John Merrick was a really good 470 Olympic sailor and they set up a trust in his honour. If you can't afford things, you write to them and they have a panel of people who decide who they want to give money to. They obviously only have a certain amount of money so they have various fund raising events. We already get money from Volvo through

the RYA and through the National squad for example if we have a week long training camp it would cost probably £300 whereas if it wasn't subsidised it would probably be over a thousand pounds. You can't run a successful campaign at the top unless you have sponsorship. Dad worked out that our sailing this year alone would cost in the region of £15,000. Obviously we can't afford that without sponsorship.

6 LONDON 2012

James: We could qualify for 2012 if we got into the 470 class and just won straight away. But there was a guy last year who sailed a 420 won everything – was incredible. Got into the 470 this year and is about 30th or 40th! That's good to go straight into the class and do that well but it's not good enough to get selected for Olympics so it highlights to us how much more we have got to do.

Tim: It's been my dream since I was 9 or 10 to go to the Olympics. It would be amazing. There are so few people that do it – an amazing opportunity to try and get a medal.