

Dear Australian Sailing Team,

For each of the past few Olympics I have composed a tribute to the Australian Sailing Team as part of my regular CEO communication. Today I consulted with Ronstan's Managing Director, Scot West, about how we could best acknowledge the team again, and he agreed that I should make a "comeback" for these Olympics. The letter is unashamedly personal and Australia-centric, but I know it reflects the pride and appreciation of the whole Ronstan team as a 50 year supporter of the Australian Sailing Team. Thanks Scot!

It's now a week since the last race of the Olympics and I'm having withdrawal symptoms. In this Covid/lockdown world you brought some light, some entertainment, some inspiration and yes, some joy into my life and into the lives of many yachties back here in Australia. And now we all have to wait another three years to experience it again....

The Australian Sailing Board was into it! Every day for six hours we were on our couches (or sometimes a hiking bench!) around the country, tuned in to the live coverage on 7Plus, watching your every start, tack and gybe and cheering you on. With our fearless leader Daniel Belcher, showing some obvious bias in the case of the Mens' 470, there was an endless stream of comments on our WhatsApp group, to which we added Matt Allen and Sarah Kenny, as Skip, Jenni, Suzanne, Garry, Jo, Shevaun and I traded comments on every move you made. Of course it is easy from the couch....we rarely made a mistake! So, I didn't miss a minute and I now appear to have what are suspiciously like bed sores! But it was so much fun and was just the greatest bonding exercise for us. You brought us together.

Nia, Monique, Will, Sam, Tess and Jaime, you didn't win medals but you won our hearts. You are very much part of the fabric of this great team. You will have had a wonderful experience at Enoshima and I know you will be bigger and better for it for your next go around.

Jake and Mara, what is it with you guys? Absolute highlights were Mara's 3rd and 1st places on the last day, and Jake's 6th and 2nd on the last full race day and 3rd in the Medal Race. And Jake, you have form here, as evidenced by your 2nd place in the Medal Race at Rio and your barnstorming finish in the Finn Gold Cup in Melbourne. So, I'm guessing, Mara and Jake, that you are both night owls, groggy in the mornings and wild in the evenings, saving your best 'til last.....am I right?



Hanging out watching the Olympics, noting champagne to celebrate Mat/Will gold, Finn Medal Race on screen with Jake leading, team vest, Victor's book for inspiration.

Jase and Lisa, I know how high your aspirations were, but sometimes it's just not meant to be. You sailed very well anyway and should be proud of yourselves. I know you will be doing all you can to work out where those Italians and Brits got that extra ounce of boatspeed.

Matt and Blackers....phenomenal! After that start to your regatta, that was the true sign of a champion! You strung together a phenomenal set of results that put you head and shoulders above the rest... continuing Blackers' run of three golds with three different sailors!

Mat, Will and Victor....phenomenal too! You are simply the consummate professionals, the standard to which all other 470 sailors aspire, but just can't match! Personally, I couldn't be more thrilled as you are such good friends. What an honour for you, Mat, to represent all Australian athletes as our flagbearer at the closing ceremony. Good on you, mate!

Of course, all of you sailors would say it has been a great team effort, and it has been:

Big Fella, Iain, you led the team from the front, in your calm, but passionate and totally involved way. As far as I'm concerned it just proves the adage that "If you want something big done, just ask a Murray!" And I know you will say you couldn't have done it without Caroline.

Mike McGovern, you brought your background of structure, attention to detail, High Performance disciplines and experience to the fore...the perfect complement to Iain and his team.

I've mentioned two coaches already, and I know how much you mean to your sailors....thank you and well done to Mal, Tristan, Rafa, Harry, Ruslana and Bundy as well.

Behind the scenes, in support, we had our Chief Medical Officer Kathy, physiotherapist Ashley, psychologist Andrea, meteorologists Karina and Libby, nutritionist Benita, boatman Mark, rules advisor Richard, performance analyst Sam, chefs Palasis and Thomas (man that food looked good!) and media officer Katherine. Hoping I haven't forgotten anyone, a huge well done to all!

Back at home, much work was put in in advance, and the fires were kept burning by our CEO Ben Houston, our Senior Leadership team of David, Manny, Chris, Sarah, Glen, Mike and Michael, and all of their teams. Great work with the publicity, Michael!

During the Olympics I had some excited dialogue with some of our Patrons, who were just as engrossed as the rest of us. Thank you to Robert, Andrew, Simon, Marcus, John, John, Leslie, Sandy, Norman, Lang and David, for all you do for sailing!

You all did a great job for our partners, sponsors and official suppliers, and Ronstan is proud to be one of them.

You did a great job for the sport of sailing in Australia. Here is our sport being showcased as something to aspire to, as tough and competitive and athletic....and yes, something Australia is great at! More on that later....

Most importantly, you brought a great deal of joy to your friends and families, and all sailors back in Australia. Perhaps we weren't able to gather as we would have liked to in many cases, but we all found ways to enjoy your journey.

So, a few bullet points from me of my personal highlights from the Olympics, before I finish with a final rave about sailing:

- The Tokyo Olympics themselves! In these extraordinarily difficult times, the people of Japan did an unbelievable job just putting them on. Arigato gozaimasu to all! To quote IOC President Thomas Bach, the Tokyo Olympics were the Olympic Games of hope, solidarity and peace.
- Credit where it is due....Our swimmers really set the scene, with so many great performances! A big well done to our friends, ex President John Bertrand, who laid a lot of the groundwork, and CEO Alex Baumann.
- Credit again....GBR in sailing! Thankfully I didn't have any bottle of Grange bets this time with my old mate David Graham of World Sailing, as it has been proving costly over the past couple of Olympics. I hate to admit it, but GBR is the benchmark, with GBR winning a total of 64 Olympic sailing medals in history, compared to our 29. At these Tokyo games they were just fantastic, with 5 medals, 3 of them gold!
- Race wins by Mat/Will, Matt, Sam/Will, Mara, Jason/Lisa.
- Champions doing their penalty turns...no fuss, no argument, just got on with it!
- The meltdown in the Laser Radial....so glad Rindom still got there!
- Drama in Mens' RSX, with three OCS in the Medal Race.
- Close finishes in other Medal Races, particularly 49er, 49erFX, Finn.
- The only female skipper in the Nacra, Danish, having a 1, 3, 1 day!
- The photos, videos, tracking, on board cameras, replays, etc.



The Australian Sailing Team, Enoshima, 2021.

So, to finish up, I've done a bit of homework on Australia in sailing at the Olympics, a story you Enoshima participants are now part of. Here's some facts, just using gold medal numbers as that's how most run the rankings:

Over the past six Olympics, sailing is Australia's second most successful sport, with 10 golds. (Swimming 31, cycling 8, rowing 6, athletics 4.)

Over history, Australia is the equal 5th most successful country. (GBR 31, USA 19, Norway 17, France 15, Denmark, Australia, Spain all 13.)

Mat Belcher is the equal 7th most successful Olympic sailor of all time. (In order Ainslie, Elvstrom, Schümann, Mankin, Scheidt, Grael, then equal Konow, Pattison, Reynolds, Percy, Belcher, Mills, wow!)

Overall rankings for past six Olympics, gold medals:

1. GBR 15
2. Australia 10
3. Kovalenko 7

So, help me here, I thought I was a smart guy....I don't even know where Kovalenko is... 😊

You're my hero, Victor, and I am so damn proud of all the rest of you too!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alistair Murray".

Alistair Murray AM
Chairman, Ronstan
Vice President, Australian Sailing