

Starting A Mid-Life Adventure

JOE HARRIS, THE 44-YEAR-OLD CFO of a real estate investment and development company in Boston, couldn't stand it any longer. The itch he couldn't scratch grew worse as he watched Brad Van Liew sail into the annals of American solo sailors by winning Class II of the 2002-'03 Around Alone Race. When could he, a longtime offshore racer and one-time commercial fisherman, turn in his pinstripes?

"I went to the Around Alone awards ceremony last fall and walked up to Brad and said, 'Congratulations. Are you ready to sell your boat?'" It may have been the fastest change of ownership of an American Open 50—ever. Along with the race-winning boat, Harris also bought some sea time with Van Liew, and began mapping his own solo career. His ultimate, albeit distant, goal is a podium finish in the 2006 5-Oceans Race (the new name for the Around Alone), but there are many steps along the way, the first of

which is the Transat Race from Plymouth, England to Boston, in June, where he'll be sharing the North Atlantic with the world's best singlehanders.



Boston businessman Joe Harris jumps into the world of solo sailing.

"It's been a dream for sure," says Harris. "I have my work cut out for me because they're all professional sailors with years of experience. I'm not necessarily in their league, but I am on the playing field."

With the six-year-old Groupe Finot design repainted with Wells Fargo signage,

Harris is following the textbook approach for today's singlehanded ocean racer: buy a proven boat, find a sponsor, visit sleep expert Dr. Claudio Stampi, go racing.

Harris has raced from Newport to Bermuda 10 times, both fully crewed and short-handed, which he feels will play to his strengths. "When I'm offshore, I'm not nervous or scared," he says, "and I'm methodic when it comes to planning and execution."

At press time in April, Harris was delivering his 50-footer to England. He expected it to be a two-week passage, giving him time to return home, check in with the family and the office, and get to England for the May 31 start. There, he'll join five Open 50s (including American Kip Stone), five Open 50 multihulls (with Rich Wilson's *Great America II*), 17 Open 60 monohulls, and 12 ORMA 60 trimarans. Then he'll finally reach that annoying itch. www.gryphonsolo.com.

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