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## HOW TO GET and HOW TO KEEP SPONSORS

Loads of people seemed to be sponsored in the Topper class last season. So how did they do that? They certainly looked professional, with logos on their sails, but in addition it's good to feel someone thinks you're worth supporting and anything that helps your parents spread the financial load has got to be good. In the future you will want to mount your own campaign so going through the process of attracting sponsors is good practice.

- The first part is to be clear what racing and training you would like to do next year to move you on to your dream goal. Plan out your campaign and include national and international events.
- The second part is to price up what it is likely to cost to do all of the above. This might be pretty scary but you could easily start by looking at what it cost last year. This will certainly be very scary especially for your parents! Think about: coaching, entry fees, accommodation, food, sports drinks, equipment (allow for breakages), insurance, travel (petrol and ferries sprint to mind but running a vehicle cost a lot more than the cost of petrol!).
- Next get a decent action photo of you on the water and a head shot that shows you looking cool (so no problem there!). Then write up your two-part biography: Personal (part 1) should include name, age, where you live, school, include clubs, awards and other activities you do. You're aiming to give the potential sponsor a glimpse into what you are like so any personal information you think they might find interesting would help. If you are featured on any websites include these website addresses. Sailing Career (part 2) list your class of boat and explain it for those not too familiar with dinghy racing (most people have a poor understanding of the sport so a website address showing all action racing would be good). Write that you are a member of the Royal Yachting Association British Junior Sailing Squad (Topper Class) Talk about how you got started in the sport and what your goals are this year and into the future. List any recent or current sponsors (if this is okay with them.)

With all of this information you can create the following documents to present to potential sponsors/supporters. Be prepared to send out lots and don't get disappointed:

1. Your ideal racing and training schedule with dates, event names, venues, town, and country.

2. Your ideal Racing Budget so you can attend all the races without worrying about money. Include real figures for the budget items you can work out.

3. Your Biography including personal and racing information, plus a couple of photos.

4. Then work on a letter of introduction. Write a couple paragraphs about who you are, how you are training for the incredibly exciting Olympic sport of dinghy racing (this might well need an explanation). Talk about how you are working towards making the \_\_\_\_\_ Team, and how you need their help and support to accomplish these goals. Let them know that a financial contribution of any size will help you. Let them know that you have included a biography, budget, racing schedule, and photos with your letter or email. Be creative, because some people may be in a position to give you things you can use rather than write you a cheque. Perhaps the local garage could donate fuel to get you to events. There are also other in-kind gifts that may help you like a new boat!, sails, equipment, energy bars, food, watch, running shoes, heart rate monitor, etc. Be specific, let them know that £2000 will get you a boat and £300 will pay all of your entry fees for the year. Include all of your contact information at the top of the letter: name, address, town, county, post code, phone, mobile phone and email address.

5. Finally and most importantly explain what you can do for them like putting a logo on your sail and sending them photographs, involving the local paper so they get a bit of publicity and keeping them involved in your progress. This will take the form of an email sent after each weekend. They will want to feel involved. A signed picture in a frame always goes down well.

It may be easier to speak with someone about sponsoring/ supporting you in your quest for dinghy racing excellence if you know the person, or know a particular person at a company, or if you know someone that can introduce you to this person. You should talk on the phone briefly with these people, everyone is busy. Look at your notes from your letter of introduction as you speak to them, and ask them if it is okay to send them some information about supporting you by letter or via email. Wait a couple weeks and give them another call to make sure they got everything okay, and ask them if they have any questions, and if they may be interested in supporting you.

More often than not a local business seems to be the answer and usually the sailor already knows someone in the organisation. Big sailing companies may be interested but they probably get lots of requests so your needs to be particularly good.

And if they agree to sponsor you, no matter to what degree, remember to say THANK YOU. Send them emails, postcards, and write thank you notes to everyone that lends you any financial or in-kind support. This may need a little

pre-planning so that you have the address to send postcards, say, when away from home. Stay in touch with these people like they are part of your support team, which of course they are, so that they can feel involved in what you achieve. The act of trying to get sponsorship is in itself a useful exercise. Don't expect to get help (even thank them for spending time just reading about you) but be really grateful if you do.

AND DON'T FORGET THE SPELL CHECK!!!!!!.

Just going through the process is useful - getting a result is awesome!

Dave Cockerill