

# Oldest and youngest chase solo records

The race is on, as it were, to set new records for the youngest and the oldest to sail single-handed round the world.

The indomitable Japanese sailor Minoru Saito, 74, left Yokohama in October on his eighth and possibly most testing solo voyage round the world: to sail non-stop round the world westabout.

Saito, one of the most experienced ocean sailors in the world, has accumulated more than 240,000 miles and finished his last solo circumnavigation three years ago despite a heart condition.

Meanwhile, 16-year-old Zac Sunderland is more than halfway through his round the world voyage. The Californian arrived in the Cocos Keeling Islands in the Indian Ocean in October and is repairing a broken boom. He aims to become the youngest circumnavigator.


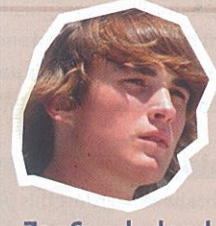

Hot on his heels will be Michael Perham, also 16. Perham made his name as the youngest to sail across the Atlantic last year in a 28ft trailer sailer, *Cheeky Monkey*. His family have chartered an Open 50 and the plan is for him to leave in early November to sail non-stop round the world, becoming the youngest person to do so single-handed.

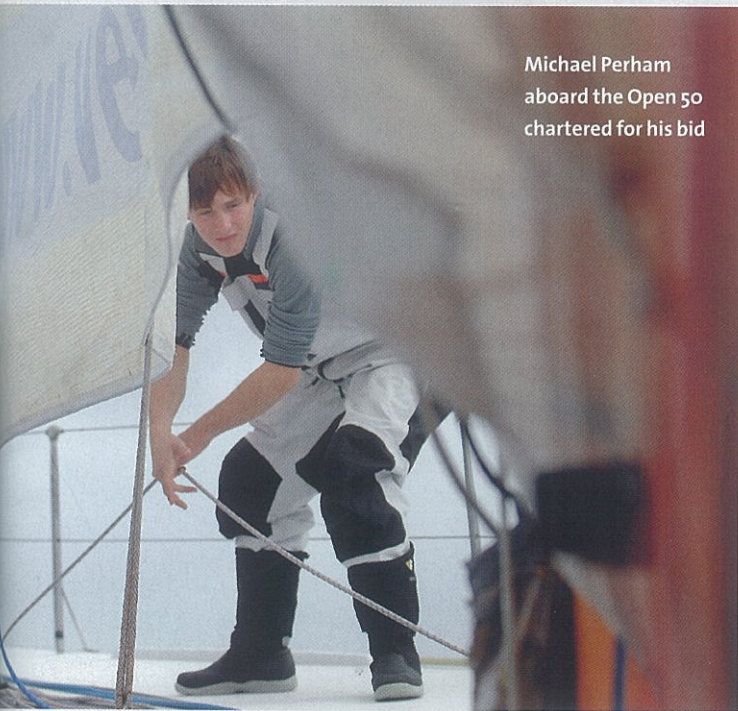
Ellen MacArthur chats to Minoru Saito



K. Soehata/OC



The contenders	Age	Boat	Voyage name	Aim	Record	Previous history	Possible finish	Chances of success
 <b>Minoru Saito</b>	74	1989-vintage 56ft steel cutter	Saito Challenge 8	To sail alone round the world non-stop along the Great Capes route against prevailing winds and currents	If he succeeds, he'll be the oldest to do so, by far. Record could stand for a very long time... Current oldest is Jean-Luc Van Den Heede who did it aged 49	Where to start? Saito is one of the most experienced solo sailors in the world – he's done it seven times already. Raced three times in the BOC Challenge race in <i>Shuten-dohji</i> and his last circumnavigation in 2005 was completed despite running low on food. Has won the Cruising Club of America's prestigious Blue Water Medal	April 2009	Very high. Solid, well-prepared cutter. Well-prepared. <a href="http://www.saito8.com">www.saito8.com</a>
 <b>Zac Sunderland</b>	16	Islander 36	None	To sail alone round the world	To be the youngest person to circumnavigate solo Record holder: Australian Jesse Martin, who did it aged 18.	Grew up aboard his family's cruising yacht, sailing all over the world and working on the 51-footer, home-schooled on board	Spring 2009	High. Clearly very good seamanship. Can't see him happy sailing in the Indian Ocean halfway already. <a href="http://www.zacsunderland.com">www.zacsunderland.com</a>
 <b>Michael Perham</b>	16	Open 50, <i>Cray Valley</i> from 1996 BOC Challenge race	SailMike/ <a href="http://totallymoney.com">totallymoney.com</a>	To sail alone round the world non-stop	To be the youngest to circumnavigate alone, non-stop	Sailed from Spain to Antigua on 28-footer in 2007, shadowed by his father in sistership. No other ocean experience	Earliest likely to be April 2009	Good question. Boat is rather tired after 10 month's sea time even a professional sailor. Learning to sail around the world still possible to see if he can beat Martin's record – March 2009. <a href="http://www.michaelperham.com">www.michaelperham.com</a>



Michael Perham  
aboard the Open 50  
chartered for his bid

**Possible finish**

**Chances of success**

April 2009

Very high. Solid, dependable, unflashy steel cutter. Well-prepared, massively experienced. [www.saito8.com](http://www.saito8.com)



Spring 2009

High. Clearly very capable sailor with ingrained seamanship. Can keep his boat working and happy sailing independently. He's more than halfway already. [www.zacsunderland.com](http://www.zacsunderland.com)

Earliest likely to be  
April 2009



Good question. Experience very limited. Boat is rather tired. Will have less than a month's sea time on the water beforehand – even a professional sailor would balk at learning to sail an Open 50 solo this quickly. But still possible to set off next year to beat Jesse Martin's record – Perham will only turn 18 in March 2009. [SailMike/totallymoney.com](http://SailMike/totallymoney.com)

**THERE BE WHALES**

How often do yachts and whales meet in mid-ocean? It's a question to which no one knows the answer because it has never been asked. Now cruising website [noonsite.com](http://noonsite.com) has launched an online survey to try to find out when and where whale sightings and collisions with yachts occurred. If you have an encounter to report you can fill it in online at <http://tiny.cc/esbgs>



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PA Photos

**Yachtsman killed by pirates**

Venezuela's reputation as a no-go area for cruisers worsened in September when French charter skipper Philippe Leudière was shot and killed aboard his Lagoon 410 catamaran Chrysalide at anchor in the port of Caraballeda. Leudière was confronted by a number of armed robbers and shot four times.

The gang plundered the boat and escaped with Venezuelan bolivars and US dollars.

Incidents are becoming disturbingly regular. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has confirmed that this is the fourth act of piracy this year against French nationals cruising in Venezuela and has advised against visiting the mainland or the island of Margarita.

**European yachting in figures\***

**€13 billion**  
amount spent every year on boats and boating products in Europe

**6 million**  
number of boats in Europe annually

**49,900**  
number of new boats sold

**8,900**  
number of new sailing boats

**38%** percentage of the total manufactured in France

\*British Marine Federation market overview