All in a Day's Work

Maria Coleman: Irish Olympic Sailor

PROFILE

Maria Coleman is one of the world's top female sailors and was once ranked 2nd in the world. She began sailing in Baltimore in Co. Cork when she was a child and continued when she went to University. She has a degree in Biology and a Masters in Oceanography but sailing is her passion. She has travelled the world sailing in regattas in Europe, Australia and America and has won the European and World Championships. In 2000 she sailed in the Sydney Olympics and in 2004 she was the only female on Ireland's Olympic Sailing Team in Athens. She is also the first female to receive the Irish Sailor of the Year award in 2001. Sailing is a tough and expensive sport but Maria loves a challenge. She often had to tow her own boat, sleep in her van and, in order to learn everything there was to know about boats, she even worked as a boat builder! Here she tells us what life as a sailor is like!

A Day in the Life of Maria Coleman

What made you decide you wanted to be a sailor?
I loved being on the water and it was great fun learning the sport.

How did you first find out about being a sailor? Growing up in Baltimore, my father bought some boats and we sailed them in the harbour.

Did you have to study to become a sailor? No, it helps to study so your concentration on the water is better and your knowledge of technical problems is better but you can be a good sailor without this help.

What is the best thing about your job?
When I was sailing, the best thing was being able to do something I loved and being challenged to the highest level.

What's the worst thing about your job?
Being away from home and my friends for long periods.

What was the most exciting race you ever sailed in?
The last race of the Athens Olympics.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to be a sailor? Keep practising on the sea and you will only get better. You will learn something new every time.

What is the first task you must carry out at the start of ever day/race? Check how the sky and sea look to see what kind of day it will be.

What safety issues must you consider when working? Always wear a buoyancy aid and let someone know you are on the water.

What dangers are involved in your job? Getting too cold, drifting out to sea and drowning.

What is a typical day for you?
When I was training it would involve 2 hours working on boats and sails, 3 hours sailing and up to 2 hours in the gym or training another way.

Do you travel with your job?
Yes, all over the world.

Do you work alone or as a team?
It depends on the boat. Sometimes I sailed with others, sometimes by myself. Even when I was by myself there was a team of people around me helping so I never thought of it as working alone.

What would you do if you weren't a sailor? I'd be a surfer or kite surfer or windsurfer!