

After the Optimist

The Olympic dream

Kids dream. Parents dream. Maybe even the men in blue blazers sometimes dream!

It is achievable:

Siren Sundby

**Optimist European Champion (Girls)
1995 & 1996
Girls' Gold & 10th over-all, Optimist
Worlds 1997
ISAF World Youth Champion 2000
Olympian 2000
OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST 2004**



The medallists

74% of the skippers of the medal-winning boats were former Optimist sailors. And over 70% of these had sailed in IODA World or continental championships.

Optiworld congratulates the following ex-Optimists on their medals (* = Optimist international):

Robert Scheidt*	Natalia Via Dufresne*	Therese Torgersson*
Ben Ainslie*	John Lovell*	Chris Draper*
Siren Sundby*	Ross MacDonald	Santiago Lange*
Sofia Bekatorou*	Nikolaos Kaklamanakis	Xavier Rohart*
Iker Martinez*	Vasilij Zbogaz*	Pascal Rambeau
Andreas Geritzer*	Matthias Kusznierevicz	Dorte Jensen
Rafael Trujillo	Signe Livbjerg	Sarah Webb
Nick Rogers*	Kazuto Seki*	

The Olympians

At least 60% of all Olympic boat skippers were ex-Optimists and almost 70% of these were former Optimist internationals.

But what about the others?

The Olympic dream is not for everyone.

With just over 400 places at each Olympics (including those who do it standing up!) and maybe 6,000 Optimist internationals in a decade, only a tiny proportion will make the transition. It may take 15 or more years of dedicated effort. And it may end in frustration.

The evidence is that only 15% will even try, the percentage of the relevant age-group which participated in the 2003 ISAF Olympic Classes world championship.

But the others don't give up competitive sailing.

A study of the sailors at the 1995 Optimist Worlds has found that 66% of them can be *identified* as sailing later, and in the European Union this figure rises to 80%, perhaps because of better internet reporting.

Sailing is for life!

A lifetime sport

Sailing is a lifetime sport where those aged 8 to 80 are practising the same skills. One of the tasks of the Optimist Class is to provide the sailors of the future.

70-80% continue to sail

Research on the internet has established that *at least* two thirds of the thousands of Optimist sailors who reach national championship level each year continue to sail competitively after the Optimist

Feeding the youth Classes

The immediate next boat for nearly 80% of top Optimist sailors is the Laser or the 420 (though in some countries they graduate directly to the 470).

The recent expansion of the Laser 4.7 has provided a much needed additional step especially in countries with windy conditions.

The Europe remains popular in northern Europe and among girls, and a surprising number go directly to Snipes.

A number of newer boats have been developed specifically for the post-Optimist market but few of them seem as yet to have made much impact worldwide.

and later

Older ex-Optimists can be found sailing almost anything that races!

Even of those with no desire to go the Olympic way many remain faithful to their Lasers or 470s, but the inshore one-design keelboats also attract many of the by now unrecognisable former Optimist urchins!