

# Lessons from the Savage Seas: Brad Van Liew

*In tales of grueling solo races that push physical and mental endurance to the limits, Brad Van Liew tells what it takes to be the best.*



(Photo: Ainhoa Sanchez, VELUX 5 OCEANS)

## Racing Around the World Alone

More people have traveled in space than have raced by sail around the globe alone. Only 15 Americans have done so. Brad Van Liew is one of them. He is now the only American to ever finish three solo races around the globe, racking up more than 120,000 miles on the precious 70 percent of the planet covered in water.

At 43, Brad is America's undisputed #1 extreme solo sailor. He competes in – and has won – the world's toughest single-handed around-the-world races. Each event requires courage, grit and relentless determination as Brad weathers solitude, sleep deprivation, sparse living conditions, hurricane-force winds and monstrous waves. Between adventures, he fascinates audiences with his true adventures, demonstrating how the human spirit triumphs over the most daunting threats of nature, and showing how everyone can benefit from the experiences of extreme athletes.

*Brad's story would be of interest to any group simply because of the extreme nature of his adventures. Further-more, his message of defining and achieving dreams would be of great value to any organization seeking to inspire the troops to achieve collective goals. ~ Joseph Harris, CFO  
New Boston Fund*

**Book an Engagement with Brad Van Liew: +1 (817) 528-0834, or [info@oceanracing.org](mailto:info@oceanracing.org)**

## Speeches Tailored to Your Audience

A gifted and charismatic speaker, Brad loves to share stories of his adventures on the world's wildest oceans. He has presented to groups as diverse as Sun Microsystems, Wells Fargo, the American Heart Association, Honeywell, Young Presidents Organization, schools, and private yacht clubs.

*Brad's time alone at sea during the 2002 around the world race: 148 days, 16 hours, 54 minutes, 52 seconds.*

Brad customizes each speech to the precise needs of clients, turning his amazing personal stories into inspiration for people in any walk of life. Topics often include leadership, teamwork, following your dream, discovering hidden strengths, preparing for anything, and overcoming both physical hardship and emotional despair. Listeners walk away not just thinking "Wow, what a hero," but also convinced that they, too, can accomplish great things.

## The Latest Adventure

Brad Van Liew just completed his third solo race around the world, leading the ECO 60 fleet of race boats on every ocean sprint to win the VELUX 5 OCEANS® race.\* He is the first American to ever finish three races around the globe and the first person worldwide to win the race twice sweeping all legs of the event. He sailed a recycled boat, using every solar and hydro-generating resource he could muster to avoid the use of fossil fuels. He has shared his journey with fans worldwide via websites, blogs, newspapers, broadcast media and social networks. Follow him on:

- <http://lazarusracing.blogspot.com/>
- <http://www.youtube.com/user/VanLiewAdventuresLLC>
- [www.oceanracing.org](http://www.oceanracing.org)
- [www.velux5oceans.com](http://www.velux5oceans.com)



*Brad Van Liew holds the World Distance Record for sailing solo aboard a 50-foot monohull vessel – 345 miles in 24 hours.*

(Photo: Ainhoa Sanchez, VELUX 5)

\*The VELUX 5 OCEANS, formerly the BOC Challenge and Around Alone, is the oldest single-handed round-the-world yacht race. Run every four years since 1982, the race is the longest and toughest event for any individual in any sport. The VELUX 5 OCEANS is a series of five high-pressure ocean sprints within a marathon circumnavigation. In the course of the 30,000 mile race, the skippers cross five oceans alone.

## Career Highlights

### Winner, VELUX 5 OCEANS race 2010-11

Brad Van Liew is the very first American to ever officially finish three solo races around the globe. He is also the first person worldwide to sweep all legs of the VELUX 5 OCEANS race for two complete events. The VELUX 5 OCEANS, the longest running solo round the world race, began on Oct. 17, 2010, in La Rochelle, France, and included five ocean sprints to Cape Town, South Africa; Wellington, New Zealand; Punta del Este, Uruguay; Charleston, S.C.; and then concluded back across the Atlantic in France in May 2011. Van Liew returned to solo ocean racing after a six year hiatus, targeting the exciting Eco 60 Class. This event challenged entries to race solo around the globe sharing ocean topics focused on sustainability with a worldwide audience. Van Liew implemented state-of-the-art hydrogenerators and solar panels, reducing his fossil fuel use by more than 75%.

### Winner, Around Alone Race, 2002-03

Brad won first place in the 50-foot division of the grueling Around Alone race aboard *Tommy Hilfiger Freedom America*, and first place in every leg of the 30,000-mile odyssey. In fact, he beat his closest competitor by an astounding 21 days. His adventure and victory were covered by mainstream media around the world, including NBC Nightly News, CNN American Morning, *The New York Times*, *Esquire*, *Men's Journal*, *Outside Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*, and hundreds of international media outlets. The media value delivered to his sponsors exceeded US\$20 million. As a professional sailor and businessman, Brad secured key sponsorships for the event with companies such as Tommy Hilfiger, Allied Domecq, Panasonic, Nextel, and Honeywell.

### Third Place, Around Alone Race, 1998-99

Brad was an underdog in his first solo circumnavigation race on a boat older and slower than his competition. Despite a devastating dismasting in the Southern Ocean, he persevered and surprised the skeptics, finishing in third place in the 50-foot division aboard *Balance Bar*.

### Executive Director – So. Carolina Maritime Foundation, 2004 - 09

Doing a stint ashore with a large nonprofit, Brad secured more than \$8 million in revenue; completed construction of the 140-foot classic sailing ship *Spirit of South Carolina*; and managed the Charleston Harbor Fest event, Charleston Race Week regatta and the Charleston to Bermuda yacht race. During his tenure directing the organization, annual event revenues soared more than 2000%.

*Brad has a unique ability to bring his audience through a range of emotions. His passion for competitive sailing is palpable. And his concern for his newborn daughter brings everything back full circle to what's really important -- balancing work and family, which we all struggle with. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and could have listened for at least another hour.*  
~ Timothy Swinger, VP Marketing, Honeywell

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## Bring the Excitement of Brad's Adventures to Your Organization

When not battling the Seven Seas, Brad Van Liew is available for speaking engagements. He enjoys teaching others about overcoming extreme adversity, multi-tasking, inspiring teams, and never giving up. Popular topics include:

### Leadership

- Motivating yourself and others to achieve extraordinary goals

### Discovering & Maximizing Your Strengths

- A chronological look at Brad's journey to discover his best suit

### Teamwork Across Borders

- How one man inspired his employees to be passionate, selfless, and results driven in their positions, despite often being separated by oceans

### Chasing Your Dream

- A real-life tale of planning a route to, and ultimately achieving, your passion

### Preparing Yourself for Anything

- A young father's balancing act – risking his life but in a responsible way
- Exploring the intense detailed preparation that prevents mistakes

### Sleep Management

- Push yourself to the limit – yet stay efficient enough to survive

### Sponsorship

- Find financial backing for extreme sports -- and keep sponsors happy

### Technology

- Building the fastest boats in the world
- Nonstop satellite communication from the most remote regions of the planet
- Dissecting weather imagery and using it for your own purpose – speed or safety
- Renewable energy solutions that improve our environment

### Self Reliance

- Preparing for solo ventures on land or at sea with calculated risk and reward
- Going it alone – the ultimate challenge to your human spirit

*Brad is a big bear of a guy with a bottomless pit of stories to tell. After listening to him for a few minutes, you will be drawn into his world and experience a life that has been lived to its fullest.*  
~Brian Hancock  
Journalist

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## Detailed Story Angles

### It's Not About the Boat

Van Liew shares more than a race with audiences. He shares his life, the trials and tribulations of an extreme athlete – early childhood training, inspiration from his mentors, the struggle to define his career, desperate times, the quest for sponsorship, building credibility, losing friends, and finally realizing his life dream in an unprecedented victory.

### Taking Charge

Brad is a natural leader and entrepreneur. After graduating college, he attained every license the FAA offers pilots, and began teaching aerobatics in Southern California. Bored with the monotony, he started an executive air charter business for the Hollywood jet set. He was happy with this, but realized that there was one challenge eluding him – the VELUX 5 OCEANS sailing race (previously the Around Alone). He could not ignore it any longer. Could he sail around the world, alone? Could he win?

*It was quite an opportunity to hear how Brad Van Liew planned and prepared for his adventure, then executed it with precision and skill. He is a role model for me, teaching me about setting high goals and not giving up on your dreams.*

~ David L. Dunlap  
President & CEO, Roper  
St. Francis Healthcare

### Building a Dream

Without the personal resources to fund a multi-million-dollar race program, Van Liew was faced with a problem. How would he accomplish his dream of racing solo around the globe? He recruited friends, family, volunteers, and learned about corporate sponsorship in the world of sports. This was not your standard ball game, so there were added hurdles to explaining the sport and the return that sponsors would receive. Additionally, the risk factor did not bode well for cautious corporations. Many sailors have died attempting to race solo around the globe. Could he prove that he would be a winner?

### Making It Happen

Van Liew took massive risks, personally and professionally, to make it to the starting line. With a combination of borrowed, earned and sponsored cash, and his young family by his side, Van Liew began his first race in 1998, only to face even greater unforeseen challenges once the race began.

### Hardship

Facing every extreme that Mother Nature could muster, Van Liew spent 155 days at sea alone in 1998-99. There were deadly storms with hurricane force winds and waves that towered eight stories high. He was knocked down several times and finally capsized in the deep Southern Ocean. Bruised and shaken, it took Van Liew days to collect himself and muster the courage to put a sail back up. He had cleared the nautical summit of Cape Horn -- but his greatest challenge lay ahead.

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### **Overcoming Adversity**

Off the coast of Brazil, Van Liew faced disaster. His boat, which was simultaneously his racing machine, home, cocoon, and the only thing keeping him alive, was literally dead in the water when the mast, sails, and rigging all came tumbling down in rough Atlantic waters. His race was over, or so he thought. After calling in his troubles via satellite, he learned that his teammates would not stand for defeat. Other competitors donated sails, manpower and sponsors. Van Liew restarted the race 1,000 miles behind and passed most of the fleet to win third place in 1999, then went on to win first place in class II of the 2002-3 event and first place overall in 2011.

### **Extreme Living**

The solitude of racing alone around the globe is a powerful challenge on its own. Add sleep deprivation, navigation, weather analysis, sail changes, and medical emergencies at sea and you have one of the most daring and extreme jobs of all time. The physical and mental endurance required in this sport is unfathomable.

### **The Secret Struggle**

Van Liew's 2002-3 race brought mental challenges he had never faced, especially leaving a five-month-old baby on the docks and missing her first year of life. Van Liew says he was not racing the competition, but racing to get to the next port to spend time with Tate Magellan.

### **Teamwork**

Van Liew says, "I'm just the lucky guy who gets to drive the boat." Often compared to Formula One racing, offshore racing requires an extensive behind-the-scenes support team. There is a pit crew in each port, a marketing team, logistics and sponsorship.

### **Career & Life Threat**

After Van Liew's first circumnavigation and during the fundraising for his second, severe back and leg pain shut him down. It progressed to a point of not being able to walk. Nerve blocks, epidurals, and heavy medication did nothing to ease the pain. He had to go under the knife for back surgery. Once complete, his pain remained and grew even more intense. After six months another surgery finally corrected the disk problem and Van Liew was free to sail again.

### **Managing Expectations**

As the only race veteran and with a stellar racing machine, Van Liew was expected to win the 2002-3 race. This was an unfamiliar role for the previous underdog candidate. The stress gained momentum as Van Liew began the race and chocked up a healthy lead. He was on the brink of quitting half way around the world, but managed to find peace with this new role and to discern his own expectations from those of others.

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### **The Rocky Balboa Moment**

After a lifelong dream to win the Around Alone solo race, Van Liew crossed the finish line in Newport, Rhode Island an amazing 21 days ahead of his competition. With humor and grace, he commends all of his competitors, saying that “to finish is to win.”

**To learn more about Brad Van Liew speaking to your organization,  
please contact us today:**

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<http://www.facebook.com/TeamLazarus>

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